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A STAR OF THE SALONS

JULIE DE LESPINASSE

FROM A WATER-COLOUR SKETCH BY CARMONTELLE IN THE MUSÉE DE CHANTILLY

Alice W Black

663

A STAR OF THE SALONS

JULIE DE LESPINASSE

BY

CAMILLA JEBB

WITH TWENTY ILLUSTRATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

THE remarkable woman whose name stands on the title-page of this book has for several years exercised a singular fascination over me. My ideas concerning her, derived in the first instance mainly from the standard edition of her "Letters to Guibert" by M. Eugène Asse (supplemented by his little book, "Mademoiselle de Lespinasse et la Marquise du Deffand," and by M. Charles Henry's "Lettres Inédites de Mademoiselle de Lespinasse), have been of course enormously enlarged since the appearance of the Marquis de Ségur's invaluable study, "Julie de Lespinasse." It would be impossible for me adequately to express the gratitude which, in common with all admirers of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, I feel towards M. de Ségur for the discoveries due to his research (notably as regards the de Vichy family and the Marquis de Mora), and also for the extraordinary insight and sympathy with which he has treated the whole subject. The subsequent republication of the "Letters," by the Comte de Villeneuve-Guibert has been also an event of much importance, as this revised edition includes many passages previously omitted, and further, a considerable number

of Guibert's replies, hitherto supposed to be irretrievably lost.

I have ventured to hope that the story of Julie de Lespinasse, as seen by a biographer of her own sex and of different nationality, may reveal some aspects of the case hitherto unnoticed and not without interest. I have also endeavoured to give some idea of the background against which she moved, and the strange transitional epoch in which her life was cast.

In conclusion, I would fain offer my earnest thanks to M. Charles Henry, M. le Marquis d'Albon, M. le Marquis de Ségur, M. Pierre de Nolhac and M. Gruyer for the personal kindness they have shown to me, a stranger and an alien, and the many valuable suggestions with which they have helped me.

The principal authorities consulted, apart from those which I have already enumerated, are, the memoirs, correspondence and writings generally of d'Alembert, Madame du Deffand, Turgot, Condorcet, Marmontel, Diderot, Morellet, Voltaire, Rousseau, d'Argenson, Duc de Lauzun, Horace Walpole, Duclos, Madame de Genlis, Madame Roland, Madame d'Épinay, Madame de Tencin, Madame Suard, Madame de Staal-Delaunay; the works of the Brothers Goncourt, Taine, de Tocqueville, Sainte Beuve, Mr John Morley and Lady Dilke; Grimm's "Correspondance Littéraire," Mercier's "Tableau de Paris"; Restif de la Bretonne's "Nuits de Paris"; Arthur Young's "Travels in France"; John Hill Burton's "Letters of Eminent Persons addressed to David Hume" and "Life and Correspondence of David Hume"; "Lettres de

Mademoiselle Aïssé" (ed. Eugène Asse); M. de Ségur's "Gens d'Autrefois"; M. de Haussonville's "Salon de Madame Necker"; M. Guillois' "Salon de Madame Helvétius"; M. Maugras' "Les comédiens hors la loi"; "Le Président Hénault et Madame du Deffand," by Lucien Perey; "Les Encyclopédistes," by L. Ducros; "Mesdames nos Aïeules," by A. Robida.

C. J.

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A STAR OF THE SALONS

CHAPTER I

A STRANGE FAMILY HISTORY

ON the 9th of November 1732, in a modest house at Lyon, long since demolished, there came into the world a little girl destined to be hereafter distinguished by a remarkable character and a career equally remarkable. No rejoicings welcomed her birth, for it was the direct evidence of her mother's shame, and public opinion, even in that tolerant age, required that so palpable a fact should be shrouded by a veil of decent mystery.

The mistress of the house above-mentioned was by profession a midwife, while her husband practised the calling, then esteemed almost equally humble, of surgeon. The lady who, probably under an assumed name, had sought shelter and assistance from this respectable couple was Julie d'Albon, the heiress of an ancient and illustrious family represented at the present day by a lineal descendant of this very Countess. Her relations, naturally wishing to keep the ancestral estates which had fallen to her lot in the family name, had married her, at the age of sixteen, to the Comte d'Albon, her cousin. In spite of all the excellent arguments which are nowadays urged in defence of such *mariages de convenance*, it is an incontestable fact that this union was not a happy one.

For over twelve years the young people lived an outwardly united life in the ancient feudal château of Avauges, which formed part of Julie d'Albon's inheritance. They had four children (of whom only two survived), but soon after the birth of the last —the son and heir—the Comte d'Albon quitted Avauges, never apparently to return, and withdrew to his native town of Roanne, where he spent the rest of his life.

The causes of this rupture are matter of conjecture only, but it seems almost certain that, up to that time, the balance of wrongdoing had lain on the side of the man. Otherwise it would be difficult to account for the humble and effaced rôle which he henceforward sustained. He long survived his wife, but seems to have been all along ignored by his children, who were left in their mother's care. The French husband was then armed by law with formidable powers against an offending wife. If legal evidence of her faithlessness was forthcoming he could imprison her for life in a convent and appropriate all her money, subject to a bare maintenance of some fifty pounds a year. Such rigour was indeed little in accordance with the spirit of the age, but the statutes authorising it remained in force, and instances of their revival occurred at a much later period than that at present in question. If the Comte d'Albon did not, in the light of his wife's subsequent behaviour, attempt even to deprive her of the guardianship of the children or the control of her estates, of which she was left mistress, it must have been from a consciousness that his own conduct had not been such as would bear the light of publicity.

The exact nature of the conditions under which the young couple parted is also uncertain. Divorce, in

the proper sense of the term, was then unknown in France, as in other Roman Catholic countries. D'Argenson, it may be observed, though a student of law, appears surprised at discovering its existence amongst Protestants. Judicial separations, on the contrary, were in this century of common occurrence, and, as in a modern police court, were nearly always at the suit of the wife, the husband being very properly disqualified as a plaintiff by the ample, or rather excessive, privileges which he already possessed. *La demanderesse en séparation* was a prominent figure in the social life of the period. At one time as many as three hundred women were carrying on suits of this kind—an enormous proportion when we remember that they must have been drawn wholly from the upper and middle classes of society. These revolting wives—who, it may be observed in passing, had generally excellent reasons for their revolt—were required by decorum to retire while their suits were pending to certain convents set apart to receive them, and lived by no means in conventual seclusion, receiving visits from their friends and lawyers, and spending hours daily in court, for it was a point of honour for each to be present at the cases of all the others.

Judicial separation was of two kinds—of the person and of property. The first, which sanctioned the living apart of the couple, was granted only in case of great cruelty or extraordinary profligacy on the side of the husband. The second, by which the wife was given control of her own money, could be obtained if sufficient evidence were produced to show that the husband was likely to squander her fortune. This kind of separation could be arranged privately, and

in some cases the marriage contract was from the first drawn up on the basis of separate estates, much as, in England, a woman's dowry was sometimes settled on her for her own use. Probably this last arrangement was that which existed between the Comte and Comtesse d'Albon. At anyrate it is almost certain that there could have been no formal "separation of the person," or Madame d'Albon would not, as she at one time did, have contemplated the possibility of legitimatising the daughter born some years after she had ceased to live with her husband.

We must not judge the conduct of the young wife, thus left practically a widow, by the standard of our own times. From the point of view of most of her contemporaries it was inevitable that a woman in such circumstances should take a husband informally. It would seem, however, that she must have acted with unusual caution; for, though all her acquaintance knew that she had a lover, nobody knew who he was, and it is only quite recently that his identity has been revealed by the patient research of M. de Ségur, concerning whose discovery more will be said presently. When her legitimate son, Camille, was six years old, Madame d'Albon gave birth to another boy, of whom scarcely anything is known. He was educated, apparently, in a monastery at Lyon, and in due time professed as a monk. Twenty months later was born his sister, the subject of the present memoir, whom a far different lot awaited.

The little girl was baptised the day after her birth in a neighbouring church—still, we believe, existing, at Lyon—and received the names of Julie-Jeanne-Éléonore, being entered in the parish register as the child of "Claude Lespinasse, bourgeois de Lyon, and

dame Julie Navarre, his wife." Both of these are purely fictitious personages, the name of Lespinasse being derived from one of the d'Albon estates. Of the years which immediately followed little is known beyond the fact that Madame d'Albon could not bring herself to renounce her daughter as she had, in effect, renounced her son. The childhood of the little Julie was almost certainly passed in the ancient château of Avauges, which stood on the road between Lyon and Tarare. A photograph now before me represents the château as it has existed since 1765, a long three-storeyed edifice, in the style of Louis XV., but at the period of the story at which we have so far arrived the site was occupied by a genuine feudal castle, with moat and battlements; a fitting abode for a family which traces its descent backward through at least eight centuries. Hither, no doubt, the girl was brought after a year or more spent, as was then the custom even with legitimate children, in the cottage of some humble foster-mother. She was known always under the name of Lespinasse, and some transparent pretext of adoption was probably invented to account for her presence at the castle; for just as it was necessary that her birth, though its approach was doubtless known to all the neighbourhood, should not take place at her mother's house, so the *convenances* forbade that she should be explicitly owned, though she might be treated as a daughter.

Her early childhood was certainly happy. She was brought up with the same care as the two legitimate children, and probably treated with equal respect. But when she was seven years old an event occurred which was destined to exercise a most unfavourable influence upon her future—the marriage, namely, of her

half-sister, Diane d'Albon, with Gaspard de Vichy-Champrond, a neighbour, and an old friend of the family. In order to explain how the fortunes of Julie were affected by this alliance it will be necessary here to consider the question of her descent on the father's side, a question much debated by the gossips of her own day, and in later times by *littérateurs* who have interested themselves in her history. The secret, as has been already said, was preserved with such extraordinary care that, in spite of various obviously untenable conjectures, it has remained unknown till within the last year or two, when the key to the mystery was found by M. de Ségur in some hitherto unpublished manuscripts. The father of Julie de Lespinasse was, he thinks, no other than that very Gaspard de Vichy who, seven years after her birth, became the husband of her elder sister. The situation—a sufficiently familiar one to students of modern French fiction—is not pleasant to contemplate. We can imagine the suitor, level-headed, hard-natured, bent, at all costs, upon an advantageous establishment for himself, and careless of the means by which it is obtained; the girl knowing nothing of the horrible complication, and fascinated, perhaps, as girls have often been fascinated, by the finished manners and ripe experience of a lover twenty-one years older than herself; the mother heart-wrung, conscience-stricken, yielding reluctantly to the pressure brought from both sides to bear upon her. It must have been plain enough to her that no good could come of such a marriage for any of the persons concerned, but it is doubtful whether she at first foresaw the full extent of the calamity thus entailed upon the poor child whose interests should have been as sacred to Gaspard as they were to herself.

This strange and sinister son-in-law was fully resolved that the portion of his wife, the only legitimate daughter, should not be diminished by any provision for her unacknowledged sister. He offered a determined resistance to every measure attempted for this purpose by Madame d'Albon. Diane, who had now been instructed of the true state of affairs, seems, to her credit, to have proved herself less obdurate, but her husband's authority was with her supreme, and she dared offer no resistance to his will. His influence extended even to Camille d'Albon, who had at first shown much affection for his little sister, but was now led to consider his own rights as incompatible with hers, and hence to take sides against her. It was, doubtless, in the hope of placing the girl on a footing which should render her independent of these hostilely disposed relatives that her mother conceived the idea of obtaining recognition for her as a lawful descendant of the house of d'Albon. In view of Madame d'Albon's long alienation from her husband, this seems to us moderns an utterly chimerical project, but there was not much limit in those days to the things that could be accomplished by people of rank and wealth, and that the plan had every chance of success is proved by the intense alarm which it inspired in Gaspard de Vichy. So fierce was the opposition made by him, and, at his prompting, by his wife and brother-in-law, that the Countess found herself obliged to give way.

All that she ventured openly to do was to insert in her will a clause bequeathing to "Julie-Jeanne-Éléonore Lespinasse, daughter of Claude Lespinasse and Julie Navarre," an annuity of 300 francs, with a further legacy of 6000 francs to be paid in case she either married or entered religion. Bequests

of a like nature, but somewhat smaller in amount, were also made in favour of Hilaire-Hubert, Julie's brother by the full blood, who two years after the death of Madame d'Albon did in effect "enter religion," and presumably received the scanty portion assigned him in that event. But the daughter, who had been from infancy her mother's companion, could not be so lightly set aside as the son, whom she had, perhaps, never seen since his birth. Unknown to Gaspard and Camille, the Countess had contrived to lay by a large sum of money in a desk in her room, and on the eve of her death, which occurred about a year and a half after the above will was drawn, she called the girl, then aged fifteen, to her bedside, and secretly gave the whole amount into her possession, with injunctions to keep it for herself. The poor child, unfitted alike by age, temperament and education for that grim "struggle for existence" which was henceforth to be her portion, handed over the money intact to her brother, Camille (who made no hesitation about taking it), and never benefited to the extent of a single penny by her mother's dying gift.

It was a dreary prospect indeed which lay before the hapless girl, now worse than orphaned. She had been passionately attached to her mother, whose name, as she wrote long afterwards, was "dear and venerable" to her. It would indeed appear from many strong indications that the terms on which the two stood to each other were far more affectionate and familiar than was then usual between parents and children. Instead of being banished, like the great majority of her contemporaries, to a convent school, she was brought up at the side of her mother, who herself superintended her education, and "en-

deavoured by double tenderness to make amends for having bestowed upon her the fatal gift of life." Evidently the years passed brightly and peacefully for the child until the ill-omened marriage of Diane and the unrelenting attitude of Julie's father reduced Madame d'Albon to an extremity of distress which she was unable to conceal from the innocent object of her anxiety. She terrified the little girl by vague hints concerning the dire misfortunes awaiting her in the future, the cruel enemies besetting her path; "often," we are told, "she bathed her secretly with her tears." The effect upon a sensitive and affectionate child might easily be imagined, even if we had not the after-testimony of Julie herself. "Strange irony of fate!" she writes, not long before her death, to her friend Condorcet, "my childhood was rendered unhappy by the very care and affection which increased my sensitiveness. I was familiar with terror and dismay before I had the power of reasoning or understanding." There would be the less to distract her from these gloomy impressions, as Camille, who had made her his pet and playfellow, must now have left Avauges to enter the army, and she remained alone with her mother in a solitude only broken by occasional visits from country neighbours or expeditions to the provincial town of Lyon, where Madame d'Albon had a house.

Up to the time of her mother's death, the girl, beyond a general conviction that there was something very much wrong indeed, does not seem to have understood the true nature of her position. She must certainly have been far from realising the state of Ishmael-like isolation to which she was now reduced when she confided to her treacherous brother the

money designed to secure for her some measure of independence. Perhaps it was the reading of Madame d'Albon's will, perhaps the uncompromising explanations of her relatives, which revealed to this petted daughter of a wealthy house the existence of poverty and humiliation awaiting her. Perhaps, as one authority asserts, she did not, even then, understand that she had any other cause for sorrow than the sufficient one of having lost her best friend. However this may be, her anguish of grief aroused the sympathy of Diane de Vichy, who had come, of course, to attend her mother's funeral. Even Gaspard's heart was touched with something like pity for the daughter whom he had done his best to render destitute. They proposed to the desolate girl that she should make her home with them, an offer which she accepted almost with joy—she had indeed no other resource. Camille, though much hardened by contact with the world, had not as yet lost all affection for his young sister, but, as a soldier and a bachelor, it would have been impossible for him, even had he been so minded, to take her personally under his protection. So late as 1760, Madame de Genlis notes that it was not considered decorous even for the wives of officers to accompany their husbands when on military duty. Garrison towns had then a bad name; to make them taboo for all women of good reputation was not perhaps the best expedient for improving it, but for a girl of Julie's age to break through such a convention was plainly out of the question. Accompanied therefore by her sister and her brother-in-law, whose true position towards herself was still probably unknown to her, she set out for their country house at Champrond in the adjoining province.

CHAPTER II

THE HEROINE AS INSTRUCTRESS

CHAMPROND, the estate from which Gaspard de Vichy derived his title of count, was situated on the northern frontier of the old province of the Lyonnois, in what is now the department of Saône-et-Loire. The château belonging to the estate exists no longer, but Monsieur de Ségur has published, from manuscript sources, an interesting description of it dating from 1735, or thirteen years before Julie de Lespinasse took up her abode there. Its large square tower, its moat and drawbridge, indicated the troubled period in which it was originally built, while the two great terraces facing north and south respectively, the flower-garden, the aviary and the park with its winding rivulet and long alleys of hornbeam are suggestive of later and more peaceful times, and of such scenes as we find idealised in the pictures of Watteau.

In surroundings of this kind were passed the next four years of Julie's life. The duties which occupied her were, in the main, those of governess to the children of Gaspard and Diane. The position was not, in those days, one of much dignity or importance, and was, in fact, not widely differentiated from that of an upper servant. The modern distinction between a *gouvernante*, who takes general charge of children, but does not necessarily teach them, and the *institutrice* or instructress proper, was sometimes, as we learn from a passage in Madame Roland's memoirs, theoretically

recognised, but in practice we find the two constantly confounded, and the one office was scarcely held of more account than the other. Setting aside royal and semi-royal households, the most aristocratic specimen of a private governess whom I can remember having come across in the memoirs of that period is Mademoiselle de Mars, the organist's daughter, who taught the harpsichord to Félicité de Saint-Aubyn, afterwards Madame de Genlis, and read novels with her when their history book proved too intolerably dull for the taste of either—a trait which recalls Becky Sharp at Queen's Crawley. To be relegated to such a position, therefore, might well, to a girl brought up as Julie had been, have seemed a bitter humiliation, but it is probable that she was never actually governess *en titre*, and from a playmate grew insensibly into a teacher. Perhaps it was from motives of delicacy that her sister and brother-in-law forbore, as it is pretty certain they did, to accentuate the change by any offer of payment.

In the spring of 1748, when Julie became an inmate at Champrond, the family circle consisted of Gaspard himself, his wife, and two sons, aged respectively eight and five, and in the month of May of that same year a third child, a girl, was born. For the eldest of the three, Abel, an amiable boy, who grew up into a worthy and kind-hearted man, Julie had a strong and entirely sisterly affection. Their friendship continued unbroken until the end of her life, and she always looked back upon his companionship as one of the few cheerful memories associated with her stay at Champrond. The second brother was of a less lovable character, and indeed turned out badly, and died, not much regretted, at the age of twenty-seven. The little girl above-mentioned survived her birth for some

years, but did not live to grow up. That the relations of all three with their aunt, or rather their elder sister, were of the pleasantest kind is proved by the anguish of regret with which, as Madame du Deffand declares, they witnessed her departure four years later. We know that she was always fond of children, and it was only natural that, in her loneliness and desolation, she should find comfort in the society of these young brothers, who were nearer her own age than the mistress, much more the master, of the house. Their liveliness and caressing ways would contrast pleasantly with the cold and constrained attitude maintained towards her by their parents. Her complaints of the unhappiness which she suffered at Champrond never refer to what the ill-used governess of Jane Austen's and Charlotte Brontë's days was wont to style the "drudgery" of teaching. Probably she was too intelligent to make it a drudgery either for herself or her pupils.

In this age, when the number and nature of the items which should be, must be, or can be included in the school time-table provides an eternal theme for discussion, we are naturally curious to know what were the "subjects" in which Mademoiselle de Lespinasse instructed her young relatives. Latin was then, as now, "a necessary part of every gentleman's education." Indeed, if we may judge by Monsieur d'Épinay's naïve remark that his son must learn Latin but need not understand the authors he reads because "they lead to nothing," the attitude of the French eighteenth-century parent towards classical instruction would seem to have borne a touching resemblance to that of the British paterfamilias in our own times. The teaching of Latin is certainly much simplified

if we start on both sides with a clear understanding that it is not necessary for the pupil to have any comprehension of what he reads; but even under these conditions it is not likely that Julie would have been considered equal to the task. Had she possessed the slightest smattering of classical lore, Guibert in his eulogium written after her death, would scarcely have omitted to mention so extraordinary a circumstance. Frenchwomen do not often learn Latin now, but a Frenchwoman who did so then was considered by herself and all her social circle a marvel and a portent indeed. Madame Roland has acquired the reputation of a knowledge of the "learned languages" on the score of some intermittent lessons in Latin grammar bestowed on her in childhood by a priest uncle. Madame de Genlis, though, like Miss Edgeworth, she affected to depreciate the study of classics, is equally careful to inform the world of an equally scrappy course of instruction imparted by her brother's tutor. Madame du Châtelet, the "sublime Émilie" of Voltaire, was really at the age of fifteen capable of construing Virgil with more or less correctness, but then Madame du Châtelet was the wonder of her day, the typical new woman whose example was held up as an awful warning to any misguided girl who might show a tendency to become *savante.*

The classical part of the young de Vichys' education would, therefore, probably he confided to some hanger-on, of the secretary or almoner order, such as was nearly always to be found in the houses of the nobility. Considering the number of eminent men who, at some time or other in their lives, occupied a position of this sort, it might be supposed that the presence of such inmates would contribute to the

enlivenment of the household generally and detract from the deadly dullness of life in a remote provincial château. But the Marmontels, Grimms, and Rousseaus were, of course, the rare exceptions amid a crowd of fusionless pedants like Linant, the semi-clerical tutor of M. d'Epinay's son, or insolent upstarts such as the footman promoted to be governor to the young Duke of Lauzun.

In modern languages Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was certainly better versed. About twenty years later than this time, she writes to ask her friend, David Hume for a presentation copy of his history, with a view, she says, to improving her knowledge of English; and an Italian poem copied in her own hand has been found among her posthumous papers. But we should be judging that century by the standard of this in supposing that her acquaintance with either of these tongues dates back so far as her residence at Champrond. Even for the daughters of the most exalted houses, languages formed no part of the educational curriculum, whether at school or at home. So late as the sixties Madame de Genlis, who, afterwards did much both by preaching and example, to raise the linguistic standard, mentions as a remarkable fact that one lady of her acquaintance knew English. She, herself, learnt both that language and Italian (German was not thought of) after her marriage. Madame d'Épinay, writing in 1771, marks the inauguration of the new era by observing that women are debarred from learning Latin and Greek by their "duties, occupations, and weakness," and hence restricted to French, English, and Italian literature—the consecrated apportionment which, even in England, retained its force down to the end of the early Victorian period.

But Madame d'Épinay herself, so far as I am aware, knew no English, and though she began Italian under the tuition of a masculine admirer, by way of some consolation for her husband's neglect, she made no great progress in it. Madame Roland, again, whose girlhood fell in the last half of the eighteenth century, was supposed to know some English, but as she read all her authors in translations it would not appear that her reputation was in this respect much better founded than in regard to her classical attainments. In this matter of languages France, as Madame de Genlis remarks, was much behind England, where many families kept French governesses, whereas, even towards the end of the century, it was regarded as a startling innovation to employ Englishwomen to teach French children colloquially.

Arts d'agrément, on the other hand, were a recognised factor in the education of every young lady and of many young gentlemen; even girls of the bourgeois class were taught the harpsichord, singing, and above all dancing, as a matter of course, either at their convent schools or at home (drawing, as savouring of masculinity and opening up a vista of possible studies from the nude, was less in favour). When the home was in a lonely country-house beyond the ken of visiting masters, resort was sometimes had to resident teachers of music and dancing. Thus Félicité de Saint-Aubyn, besides the instructions of Mademoiselle de Mars, had for some time the benefit of daily tuition from a professional dancer of inebriate tendencies retained by her parents in their château. We do not know whether that care for her daughter's education which, according to Guibert, distinguished Madame d'Albon was carried to this extent. In any

case, the seed could not have fallen on exceedingly fertile soil, for Julie was not apparently, in the technical sense of the word, "accomplished." Later in life she showed a strong and intelligent interest in music, especially opera, but we do not hear that she herself either played or sang. It would be more strange if she had not learned to dance, for the dancing-master was the autocrat of the century, and society was quite ready to endorse his opinion of his own art as by far the most important element in a liberal education. But at the height of her social success in Paris we do not know that she was ever so much of a ball-goer as that other mistress of a literary *salon*, Madame Necker, who danced, says Marmontel, badly, but with great spirit. On the whole, it does not seem likely that she imparted "accomplishments" to the youthful de Vichys.

In our endeavour to reconstruct the schoolroom studies at Champrond, we are thus thrown back upon the three royal R.'s, which were then regarded with less familiarity and more respect than is consistent with modern habits of thought. We do not, for example, consider it as a great achievement for either a lady or a gentleman to be able to read aloud correctly and distinctly, yet it is said that there were not above fifty persons in Paris who could do it, and the Duc de Lauzun assures us that to the possession of this exceedingly rare accomplishment, acquired from his footman-tutor, he partly owed his favour with Madame de Pompadour. In this branch of education, Julie de Lespinasse was certainly a qualified instructor, as we know that her reading afterwards found rather too much favour with the fastidious Madame du Deffand, who sometimes insisted that it

should go on all night. Writing stood on a still higher level. The nun who held the proud position of writing-mistress at the convent frequented by Madame Roland in her girlhood considered herself particularly well educated because she "wrote a beautiful hand, embroidered superbly, taught orthography well, and was not unacquainted with history!" The writing of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, if not good, is at least legible and cultivated, and her orthography conforms to the arbitrary rules of grammarians rather than to her own sense of the fit and beautiful, which is by no means always the case with the ladies of her time. Madame de Genlis, with neither surprise nor dismay, records that her brother's wife, a girl of the highest birth and most eminent piety (equally eligible, in fact, as regards both gear and grace), never learned to spell till after her marriage. With arithmetic Julie at some time of her life certainly gained a sufficient acquaintance to keep her yearly expenditure within her yearly income—the most useful purpose, perhaps, which that science can, for most of us, be made to serve.

Geography was even less a matter of course than spelling. Madame de Genlis herself, *la fée de la pédanterie*, was unacquainted with it till long after she was grown up, and so was her mistress, the Duchess of Orleans. Both had a course of lessons from a *jeune personne très instruite*, and felt that they were doing great things. History, in the shape of some such colourless abridgement as that which drove Mademoiselle de Mars and her pupil to the pages of fiction, may have been studied at Champrond, and anecdotes of elevating character and rather doubtful authenticity, such as those of Regulus

or of Alexander and the physician Philip, would be impressed upon the minds of the pupîls, and by them, perhaps, retailed for the benefit of their admiring elders. The claims of literature would be acknowledged by committing to memory some fable of La Fontaine, or perchance some tirade of Racine, and these also we can imagine the children repeating amid the applause of an adult audience. Yet this stimulus may after all have been wanting, for the fashion of subjecting children to informal examinations for the entertainment (?) of their parents' friends, though almost universal by the end of the century, had scarcely as yet superseded the older fashion of ignoring them altogether. The catechism, too, which was taught in most families by a waiting-maid, in some by the governess, rarely indeed by the mother, may well have been undertaken by Julie. The future "sœur Lespinasse," of the Encyclopædic Church, teaching her scholars to enumerate the nine orders of spirits who make up the celestial hierarchy, is a piquant spectacle for the imagination.

It was for "the care bestowed upon the education of her daughter," however, that Madame de Vichy professed herself especially grateful to the young instructress. As the said daughter was only four years old when Julie left Champrond her duties must in this instance have been rather those of a nurse than of a governess. For the first year of its existence, nevertheless, the poor little creature would, in the common course of things, be handed over almost unconditionally to the tender mercies of a foster-mother. Even in those exceptional cases where a child was not exiled to the nurse's cottage, it was not usual for the mother to attempt any unladylike

interference with her methods. The infancy of Madame de Genlis was passed under her parents' roof, but her mother neither knew, nor cared to know, that the woman upon whom she devolved her own responsibilities was physically incapable of fulfilling them, and that the luckless baby was in consequence reared upon "miaulée"—*i.e.* rye bread passed through a sieve and moistened with wine and water. In the houses of the women themselves such deceptions were even more certain to escape unnoticed, and deaths amongst children "at nurse" were, accordingly, of frequent occurrence. Madame Roland lost *six* infant brothers and sisters, and herself only survived because, contrary to the usual custom of her parents, some attention was bestowed upon the selection and supervision of the woman to whose charge she was committed.

The starvation thus begun in infancy, was, it is to be feared, often continued throughout childhood. The Duc de Lauzun in his memoirs tranquilly remarks: "Like all children of my age and rank, I had the prettiest possible clothes for going out, but at home I was naked and dying of hunger." This, he adds, was from carelessness, not cruelty. The distinction between cruelty and such carelessness is rather too subtle for ordinary minds, but in some families the starvation was on principle. Rousseau solemnly declares that the grandson of the Maréchal de Luxembourg was slowly starved to death in accordance with the atrocious regimen of the fashionable physician Bordeu. It was heartrending, he says with genuine feeling, to see this heir of a wealthy family eagerly devouring a piece of dry bread, when he could get it. The Duc de Richelieu's son, de

Fronsac, fared better than this. He might have as much dry bread as he liked for his *goûter*, or afternoon repast, but the supplement of cherries was strictly forbidden. Madame de Genlis, in her book on education, allows her imaginary pupil, Adèle, nothing but dry bread *or* fruit for her *goûter*, and then, in serene unconsciousness that she is demonstrating the complete failure of her system, frankly relates how Adèle, for once permitted to eat what she liked, straightway made herself sick by consuming "ten tartlets, six meringues, and two cups of ice-cream," an achievement at which the children of these degenerate days might well gasp in admiration. Where underfeeding is, there may greediness almost invariably be found.

Starvation or semi-starvation was not the only evil by which the eighteenth-century child was from its cradle beset. Swaddling was then the fate of all French babies, and this custom was of singular comfort to the nurse, by enabling her to disembarrass herself of her charge when she felt disinclined to attend to it. Rousseau has seldom employed his fervid eloquence to better purpose than in the indignant passage which describes the poor, helpless mummy of a baby hung on a nail to keep it out of the way, unable to move, unable to cry, purple-faced, suffocated, "crucified."[1] Our national conceit is gratified by his remark that England was, in this respect, far more civilised than France. But the awful *corps de baleine*, which for girls succeeded to the swaddling clothes, and from which

[1] Judging from a picture, "*Au Clou*," which appeared in the *Salon*, at Paris, some twenty years ago, this atrocious practice has not yet disappeared, though the children of the peasantry are now the only sufferers from it.

there was no escape till death, was, he assures us, even more a British than a French institution. In both countries there brooded over the minds of parents a constant terror of deformity for their children, especially their daughters, a terror unknown to, inconceivable by, the generation which writes letters to the daily papers lamenting the deterioration of the race. Swaddling in one country and tight lacing in both were the means employed to counteract this terror, and with such excellent results that amongst the girls who survived the treatment a "crooked figure" (a term now almost meaningless for us) seems to have been nearly as common as a smallpox-pitted face.[1] Remembering how Madame de Sevigné commends herself for the trouble she takes to improve her infant granddaughter's figure (a phrase which makes us shudder when we reflect what it implies), we are tempted to inquire whether "the care bestowed upon the education" of Mademoiselle de Vichy extended to details of this kind. It is, unhappily, not impossible. In later years, Julie de Lespinasse was, for good and for evil, an ardent admirer of Rousseau, but at this date "Émile" was still unwritten, and swaddling bands and tight stays were accepted almost without question, as matters of necessity.[2]

Even apart from tight-lacing, the clothing of girls up to the two last decades of the century was not

[1] The memoir writers and essayists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, both French and English, constantly allude, in the most matter-of-fact manner, to women afflicted with deformity—including ladies of the highest rank, from royalty downwards.

[2] From the enumeration of her wardrobe it appears that, at the time of her death, she possessed fourteen pairs of stays made of dimity, and seemingly innocent of steel and whalebone. This style of corset dates from about the year 1770, and the invention was due to the influence of Rousseau.

GIRL AND BOY OF THE PERIOD
(MADEMOISELLE DE BETHISY ET SON FRERE)
FROM A PAINTING BY A. S. BELLE IN THE MUSÉE DE VERSAILLES

such as tends to a high physical standard. The poor little wretches were dressed exactly like miniatures of their mothers—trains, *paniers*, high-heeled shoes and all. Even their very aprons (pitiful approximation to that admirable institution the pinafore) were hollow mockeries of transparent tulle embroidered with flowers, and quite as perishable as the silk frocks they were supposed to protect. For the credit of human nature we must hope that for everyday life in the country a compromise was sometimes adopted, such, for example, as the *habit de Savoyarde* mentioned by Madame de Genlis, which, though far too much ornamented for comfort, had the grand merit of clearing the ground. Old and shabby dresses would also be worn out in the peaceful seclusion of a rural home, and we all know that old clothes, whatever the wickedness of their original nature, do not involve the misery inseparable from new ones. But, whenever the children were on view, full dress was *de rigueur*. Madame de Genlis has described with equal humour and sympathy the experiences of a girl dressed for a children's ball, with powdered hair built high over an enormous pad, feathers two feet in length, stays tightened to suffocating point, and a *panier* of steel and horsehair so heavy as to make dancing a difficult achievement, and set on her way with the parting injunction, "Take care you don't smudge your rouge, or toss your hair, or crumple your frock, and be sure you enjoy yourself."

It was not in the nature of things that girls so dressed, for there was no essential difference between the *costume de promenade* and the *costume de bal*, should accomplish much in the way of outdoor exercise. But it is a curious fact that the boys, who, though they wore their petticoats much longer (in both senses of

the word), than is now usual, did ultimately get rid of them, do not appear to have been in this matter conspicuously superior to the girls. The ancient game of *barres—i.e.* prisoners' base—was, certainly, even in this century, an institution at some schools, but we learn from Rousseau, who much deplores the circumstance, that the manly sports of tennis, mall and football were considered too severe for boys, and that they were thus in general, like girls, thrown back upon the ever popular *volant*. Nor was shuttlecock the only recreation common to the youth of both sexes. One of Lancret's pictures represents a group of girls and boys, the girls with their long skirts deftly tucked up, playing *le jeu des quatre coins* (*Anglice*, Puss in the corner); and the evergreen blindman's buff and other like diversions which the modern British boy learns, from his preparatory school onwards, to despise as childish, were scarcely considered derogatory even by youths in their teens. They were also much in vogue at convent schools, and consequently the girls there educated were, says Jean-Jacques, far healthier than those brought up at home, where jumping, running, and shouting were generally barred.

In the face of this community between the sexes in the matter of recreation we are naturally chary of accepting Rousseau's dogmatic assertion that, in his time, the distinction between the eternal feminine and the equally eternal masculine displayed itself from the cradle in the voluntary adoption of toys of different species—dolls for girls, for boys the much wider field covered by drums, tops, and miniature carriages. Such of us as prefer the use of our eyes to any train of *à priori* reasoning are aware that the girl baby of our own days is by no means averse to appropriating

her brother's playthings, and that till the rigid conventionalities of scholastic tradition have cast their blighting influence on his ingenuous nature, her action in this respect is by him fully reciprocated. Doubtless the same law prevailed, perhaps to an even wider extent, in the eighteenth century. Those high-complexioned wooden dolls must often have enjoyed the (perhaps doubtful) benefit of masculine nursing, and the "horses" who drew those little carriages would sometimes be of the less worthy gender. For this last inference, indeed, we have the testimony of a picture by Coypel referred to in "La Femme au XVIIIme siècle."

When the boy grew to manhood, however, he could, if so disposed, turn his attention to the aforementioned pursuits of football, mall, and tennis, all of which were denied to the girl. We certainly hear at a somewhat later date of professional female tennis players in Paris, but their way of life was scarcely such as to confer respectability upon this innovation. Riding, again, was more or less a necessary accomplishment for gentlemen, but it did not become the fashion for ladies till much nearer the end of the century. A few women of the higher class rode and even hunted—some, like Madame de Genlis, from genuine love of the exercise, and some because in very aristocratic circles it was the correct thing to do; and when we consider the side saddle and riding habit of the period we are forced to the conclusion that either they must have been extraordinarily courageous, or, what is more probable, that *la chasse* was in point of difficulty a very different affair from modern fox-hunting. We have no evidence that Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was a horsewoman, but

in those days of exceedingly bad roads it may sometimes have happened that, like most dwellers in the country, she was obliged to ride, in Hibernian phrase, whether she could or not. We remember the artless comment of Madame de Staal when compelled to travel upon horseback: "If I had been required to mount a dromedary, I could not have been more terrified," and her frank confession that her seat in the saddle was "rather that of a bundle than a human being."

Shooting as a feminine pursuit was, like hunting, not altogether unknown. Curiously enough, it was the favourite recreation of that most gentle and womanly of women, Mademoiselle Aïssé during her visits to the country, though we hear that a certain gamekeeper made objections. It is not likely that Julie followed her example. So far as outdoor amusements are concerned, she was probably in no way above the ordinary level of her contemporaries. One country pleasure, however—bathing—she must almost certainly have enjoyed, for it seems to have been the fashion with Frenchwomen during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to bathe whenever they had a river at hand. The letters and memoirs of the period are full of references to this practice, and painters frequently show us groups of ladies playing about in some river much as girls do now at the seaside. The dress in which they are represented differs certainly from the modern bathing-costume, being sometimes a chemise and sometimes considerably less, though in such details French artists, then as now, probably drew on their imagination. But though bathing was fashionable it did not involve a knowledge of swimming. Rousseau caustically remarks

that this art could be learned for nothing, and was not therefore deemed worthy to be included in the education of a gentleman. Scarcely any boys of the better class, he says, were taught to swim. It is a safe inference that the same rule applied *à fortiori* to girls. But the whole question of country occupations and amusements requires to be treated more at large, and will be fully dealt with in the ensuing chapter.

CHAPTER III

FRENCH COUNTRY LIFE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE landed aristocracy of eighteenth-century France fall readily into two main divisions—the families who, from want of means, were compelled to live all the year round in the country, and those who practically spent their lives in Paris or its immediate neighbourhood and regarded their estates as places of exile in which, from motives of economy, it was necessary to pass a few weeks or months annually, That the country might, for its own sake, be preferable to the town was scarcely an idea seriously entertained by either class before Rousseau had made it the fashion; and, in the picturesque language of the brothers Goncourt, "the century was then very old." When Julie de Lespinasse lived at Champrond the preference for the "city square" was so open and unabashed that those who could not afford a migration to Paris often spent the winter at the nearest large provincial town. We shall perhaps find that this frankly Philistinish attitude admits of some excuse if we endeavour to realise what was then meant by country life in France. The Parisian "smart set," of whom something will be said in a subsequent chapter, simply continued their ordinary routine of amusements so far as the altered conditions would admit, but the case was very different with the stay-at-home class, in which Gaspard de Vichy may be reckoned. He certainly paid an occasional visit to

Paris, with a view to keeping in touch with his sister, Madame du Deffand, who had a little money to leave and no child to inherit it, but on these occasions his household, with the exception of Madame de Vichy, remained behind in the peaceful—and economical—seclusion of Champrond.

The monotonous dullness of that seclusion may be easily imagined if we bear in mind that the one ambition of all men and women possessing any abilities above the average was, by hook or by crook, to make their way, as Julie herself later did, to Paris.[1] Those who were left would be more or less the social and intellectual failures. To this basic fact we must add the insufferable pettiness produced by living in the narrowest possible of grooves, and moreover the difficulty of holding communication even with such neighbours as there were. True, this very difficulty lent a certain air of geniality to social intercourse in the provinces. We often read of surprise visits paid to distant châteaux, of unskilled riders taking, like Madame de Staal, their lives in their hands in order to traverse roads impassable by wheels, of large parties arriving uninvited in confident expectation of the hospitality never denied, though sometimes, necessarily, of the most impromptu kind. It sounds idyllic, but some of us perhaps know by experience that it is quite as possible to be bored over the most scrambling picnic as over an elaborate dinner-party, and that an uncongenial acquaintance is not rendered more attractive by being compulsorily converted into a room-mate. As a certain set-off we must reckon

[1] "I hope for your sake and your wife's that you will not spend this winter in the country," writes Julie, many years later, to Abel de Vichy. "The evenings are very long there."

the more frequent opportunities afforded by an unsophisticated country district of encountering curious, and sometimes ludicrous, characters. Such was that modern Bluebeard, the *bête noire* of Félicité de Saint-Aubyn's childhood, who enticed numbers of workgirls to his house and there secretly murdered them; such the crotchety old lady who would not have her fish-ponds drained, and flooded out the neighbours in consequence; and such, though belonging to an earlier generation, that eccentric Mademoiselle du Plessis, who enlivened the solitude of Madame de Sevigné. But few of us are sufficiently cynical to enjoy *always* laughing at our company, and our interest in human nature is seldom so strong that we prefer originality to good breeding in those with whom we are obliged to associate.

The general impression which we receive of provincial society as reflected in the writings of those endowed with sufficient ability to describe it is one of intense dreariness. Imagine the tedium of three successive hours spent at table, and that, too, during that most unsociable period of the day which synchronises roughly with the modern luncheon hour! Like Mr Smith, in "Evelina," one inquires what hosts and guests could have found to say to one another, and the answer is not readily forthcoming. Even at a much later date, Arthur Young was astonished by the scarcity of newspapers in French country districts, and the extraordinary ignorance and apathy displayed by the inhabitants with regard to public events. Books of one sort or other were not uncommon as a part of the furniture of country houses, but we may safely assume that the average provincial gentleman's library was not constantly recruited with supplies of modern

literature. The expedient of discussing the latest novel (for the latest novel was even then an institution) would be impossible with ladies who had not yet advanced beyond the interminable romances fashionable with an earlier generation. Sport of some kind or other the country certainly did afford, though this topic of conversation would mainly be limited to the masculine part of the company, but the various duties of landlordism, the grand juries, quarter sessions, vestries and so on, which formed the serious occupation of the English squire, were, for reasons presently to be explained, almost non-existent for his French contemporary; and to the honour of this last-named be it said that hard drinking, the English squire's usual recreation, never found much favour in his eyes. There would be nothing left for it but to talk gossip, a resource which, whatever superior people may say, is by no means to be despised. The brilliant conversationalists of the eighteenth century, such as Julie de Lespinasse, never certainly fell into the mistake of despising it, but the gossip of a scattered rural neighbourbood, consisting as it mainly does of spiteful hearsays about people in a higher social position than the gossipers, is a depressing thing at best, and only welcome as a diversion from perpetual discussion of the weather.

The longest dinner, however, must come to an end in time, and card-playing was then the order of the day. We should have expected this to be hailed as a relief from conversation under conditions such as those just indicated, but Parisians complained bitterly of the hours compulsorily devoted to old-fashioned games like *Loto* (discredited, it seems, in up-to-date circles) with the accompaniment of perpetual quarrelling

over losses amounting to a few halfpence. In such pursuits the day wore on, for in that hospitable age visits were something like visits, and just as the modern "week-end" was represented by a stay of at least a month, so the afternoon call of the period began before the twelve-o'clock dinner and lasted till after supper. The proceedings would sometimes be varied by a "promenade," but as it was usual for both ladies and gentlemen to be dressed *en grande tenue* for their midday dinner, a custom by which, as Arthur Young acutely observes, the rest of the day was spoilt for outdoor exercise, this must generally have been limited to a stroll round the grounds, or perhaps a short drive. To English imaginations an additional horror is added to the picture by the absence of that blessed cup of tea which makes even boredom more endurable; the "five o'clock" being represented by a light *goûter*, which the prolonged dinner must, on gala days, have rendered an irksome superfluity.[1]

It was probably among the duties of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse to assist Madame de Vichy in entertaining her guests on occasions of this kind, and in such experiments on vile bodies she perhaps laid the foundation for the marvellous social successes of her after years. Her young charges would also be present, at least at dinner. For supper, which was seldom earlier than nine o'clock, the children sometimes sat up, and sometimes were served in their bedrooms. Breakfast then, as now, was an informal repast[2] of coffee or chocolate, these beverages having by this time

[1] Coffee immediately after dinner was, however, already an institution.

[2] Sometimes tea, as English fashions came into vogue. In country houses the family did sometimes meet for this meal, at the curious hour of nine A.M.

established their place amongst all the well-to-do classes. The reign of Rousseau and sensibility was not yet, and children were still required to tremble, generally with excellent reason, in the presence of their parents, and, theoretically at least, to be seen rather than heard by visitors. It is refreshing to know that there were exceptions to this rule. In fact, we are repeatedly coming across instances of what, even to modern ideas, would appear excessive indulgence. As an example we may take the five-year-old boy who, when Madame de Genlis was visiting his parents, insisted on having her new hat, an exceptionally smart one, for a plaything, his fond mother only stipulating that he should ask for it nicely and *do it no harm*! It is unnecessary to state that the hat could never be worn again.

It is not likely that the children of Gaspard de Vichy, whose stern and imperious temper inspired even his wife with awe, were allowed to have much of their own way, so long at least as he was upon the scene. But the winter of 1849 was spent by him and Diane in Paris, while Julie remained at Champrond, in charge of her nephews and niece. One surmises that, to her as well as to them, the occasion must have been something of a holiday; but that she managed to restrain the exuberance of her young pupils within some kind of reasonable limits, while still retaining their sympathy, is plain from the approbation with which she was at this time regarded both by parents and children. As she herself expressly says that she knew nothing of housekeeping till she lived in her own rooms in Paris, it is evident that she was not required to occupy herself in addition with domestic concerns, which would doubtless be left in

the hands of some functionary of the majordomo order. But to the difficult task of getting on with other people's servants she must even then have brought that admirable tact and consideration which in time to come caused her to be regarded rather as a protector than a rival by the long-established, highly favoured *femme-de-chambre* of Madame du Deffand. That this girl of seventeen could, in that profligate age, be safely left for some months to her own devices is, we may also remark, a fact which lends little countenance to the suspicions attached in after years to her name. Had her mind run upon lovers she would probably have found even a country neighbourhood capable of providing some sort of specimen of that genus—such, for example, as the doctor's son who secretly courted Félicité de Saint-Aubyn and was by her contemned on account of his inferior social position.

Remembering that passionate enthusiasm for social reform which afterwards formed so close a bond between Mademoiselle de Lespinasse and the philanthropic Turgot, we are tempted to inquire whether it may have been in the first instance inspired by her early opportunities for observing the condition of the peasantry and the relations existing between them and their seigneurs. Those relations were not generally characterised by deliberate cruelty on the part of the superior class, but they may fairly be said to have attained the climax of unreality. The whole fabric of society was tottering to that awful catastrophe in which it was so shortly to be overwhelmed. The feudal system, under which the noble, while often the oppressor, was always the protector of his people, had passed away. For a long time back the Central Government had been working to break

the power of the nobility and to deprive them of every function which gave them a *raison d'être* and a possibility of usefulness. The local government of each province was in the hands of an intendant appointed by the King. All public business, notably the levying of taxation, was conducted by him and by his official subordinates. The seigneurs were almost powerless, even to protect their dependants from unjust exactions, Their judicial power, once so terrible, was also much curtailed, and they themselves, finding the cost of administering justice beyond their means, were often willing, for a price, to abandon this part of their ancient rights. When we realise that their dealings with the peasantry were mainly reduced to the always unpopular processes of rent collecting and game preserving we cannot wonder if these last began to ask themselves whether landlords were not a superfluity? The case was much aggravated by the systematic absenteeism of all landholders who could afford a house in Paris and a villa in the environs. The resident nobles were mostly poor, and often poor to an extent which we have difficulty in realising. They could do little to help their tenants. They were not, as a rule, inhuman in their dealings with them—any more than was the average Irish landlord of the bad old times now gone. Like him, they often waited long and patiently for their rents, and like him were paid for their forbearance in the somewhat intangible coin of prayers for their eternal welfare. But sometimes they were themselves so poor as to be near to actual starvation, and the result would be a fierce, wild-beast struggle with the yet more wretched peasantry. Things were no better on the estates of the wealthy absentees, and here again we are reminded of Ireland,

for the underlings left in charge behaved with a harshness which their masters, if present, would seldom have countenanced, and of which they often expressed disapproval when individual cases were brought to their notice.

But it is doubtful if even the exaction of rents produced so much bitterness as the preservation of game, and to this last rag of privilege the nobles clung with unabated tenacity, though no sort of justification for it any longer existed. In feudal times the seigneur was supposed to enjoy *le droit de chasse* in consideration of the services rendered by him in keeping down the wolves and wild boars, which were then a source of serious public danger. Some faint reflection of the old order may be traced in the wolf and boar hunts which were still sometimes held on Sundays in Brittany and other parts of France, and announced by the priest from the pulpit, the whole parish turning out after mass with their seigneur at their head. Madame de Genlis tells us of an old baron, her father's neighbour, who on one such occasion actually seized the wolf (a peculiarly fierce animal, suspected of madness) by the tongue, and held it thus till it was despatched by his followers. He lost a thumb in consequence, and went for a time in dread of hydrophobia, but we can understand that *his* tenants would see some reason in the seigneurial "right of the chase." Such cases were, however, the exception. Sport was, generally speaking, as artificial as in modern England, and, so far as regards human interests, very much more cruel. When we hear that in one district many sheep, varied by a child now and then, were carried off by young wolves purposely reared for the chase, we are inspired with a certain

contempt for poultry-stealing foxes. Game preserving was carried to an extent which nowadays seems scarcely credible. Sometimes the peasants were not permitted to perform the most urgent labours in their own fields between 1st May and 24th June, lest they should disturb the young partridges. It was no uncommon thing for them to be forced to watch all night half the year through to protect their crops from winged and four-footed marauders whose lives were—to them—perforce sacred. Regulations so severe were of course, at all risks, often infringed, and desperate affrays between poachers and gamekeepers were of frequent occurrence.

Yet when we consider the atrocious system which laid the main burden of taxation on the class least able to bear it, we may well conclude that the unhappy people owed more of their misery to the Government than to their seigneurs. The *corvée*, or compulsory labour upon the roads, the *taille*, supposed to represent the commutation for military service (the almost total exemption of the nobles being grounded on the feudal conception of them as the fighting caste), and the *gabelle* or salt-tax were the three principal exactions under which they groaned. There would be something ludicrous about this last-named imposition had its effects been less deeply tragic. Every person over the age of seven was obliged yearly to buy from the Government stores seven pounds of much-adulterated salt at thirteen sous the pound—an enormous price when we consider the relative value of money then and now. So strictly was this law enforced that many persons are said to have suffered death for buying no salt when they could not afford even to buy bread. At any moment an official might enter a

house, demand the domestic salt-box, and having tasted its contents pronounce them too pure to be otherwise than contraband. He would next examine the pot of soup on the fire and the bit of bacon or salt pork hanging from the rafters (always supposing that the family was able to indulge in such luxuries), and if he saw reason to suspect any unorthodoxy in the seasoning the results might be very serious for the unhappy householder.

The *taille* was, theoretically, proportional to the means of those who paid it, but this, apparently, was a rule which only worked one way, and that way against the contributor. If a man showed any sign of increased prosperity he could safely reckon on having to pay an increased *taille*. If an official, in the course of his inquisitorial visits to any district, noticed feathers lying about on the dust heaps he was sure to suggest to his superiors that the rateable value of a parish which could afford to consume its own poultry must be higher than had been supposed. One kind-hearted seigneur, distressed by the number of fires which occurred in the cottages on his estate, offered at his own expense to replace the thatched roofs by tiles. The peasants thanked him warmly for his good intention, but implored him to forbear, as the result would be an increase in their *taille*. Thus every effort at progress, whether in the improvement of land or otherwise, which might have been made by the better sort of either tenants or landlords was, through the suicidal policy of the Government, relentlessly crushed.

It is no marvel that famine and disease were rife, and that the country absolutely swarmed with beggars. Severe laws were enacted against these last, but there

were two reasons why they should be imperfectly carried into execution. In the first place, all the prisons in France would not have held those statutably liable to arrest as vagabonds. In the second, there was no Poor Law to fall back upon, and even official hearts were not always so hardened as to be incapable of pity for a wretch who must either beg or starve. That such was the case can only be a matter for rejoicing, for France in the eighteenth century had not, like England in the twentieth, attained to a stage of development where mere almsgiving does more harm than good. Charity, even in the technical and limited sense of that noble word, must have shed a faint ray of light on many lives otherwise plunged in utter darkness; must to some slight extent have softened the bitterness of hearts swollen by a sense of man's inhumanity to man.

Charity represented by the bestowing of alms was more or less recognised as a duty by all the well-to-do classes. The clergy in particular were often, as became their profession, compassionate, but here again the curse of absenteeism prevailed. The superior ecclesiastics were all away in Paris; the average country priest was a very poor man, and largely dependent upon his seigneur, who was often the patron of the parish church founded by his family, and expected even the hours of service to be altered to suit his convenience. It was scarcely to be hoped that men so circumstanced should have the courage to stand between the people and their lords. Yet neither would it be fair to assume that the nobles were wholly untouched by the spirit of charity. We often enough encounter individual instances of kindness shown to the poor by them and the ladies of their

families. But the utter inadequacy of such miserable tinkering, and the crying necessity for some measure of genuine reform, could scarcely fail to impress themselves upon an intelligent observer, and we may readily conjecture that it was so with Julie de Lespinasse.

CHAPTER IV

A NOTABLE VISITOR

DURING the latter half of Julie's residence at Champrond her own troubles must have occupied her sufficiently to distract her thoughts from the miseries around her. The first two years seem to have passed, if not happily, at least in comparative tranquillity. But in the course of the third year things went exceedingly wrong. We may surmise that about this time the real facts concerning her relationship to the heads of the house first became known to her. To the end of her life she never forgot the horror of this revelation, nor the cruelty with which it was made. Doubtless, as the homely saying has it, there were "faults on both sides." We may well suppose that this sensitive, high-spirited girl was far from having yet acquired that marvellous tact and self-control which in after years distinguished her. It is likely enough that the inquiries prompted by growing anxiety to understand her position were framed in no conciliatory spirit, and the brutality with which her doubts were at last resolved may thus be partly excused. We can without difficulty believe that, on learning the truth, her agony found expression in wild reproaches against her unnatural father, thereby exasperating Gaspard's violent temper to a pitch at which all compunction was lost sight of. We can imagine his savage retort that she was at least indebted to him for the bread which she did not earn,

and the feverish defiant spirit in which her services to the children, hitherto a labour of love, would now be redoubled by her, as the only means of giving him the lie, and how one miserable scene would lead inevitably to another, till the most elementary courtesy or forbearance became an impossibility.

That on the side of the de Vichys very hard things were said, and even done, there can be no reasonable doubt. We might hesitate entirely to accept Julie's statement to Madame du Deffand that she was "treated in the harshest and most humiliating manner," "that violent scenes were of every-day occurrence," for this complaint was uttered while the wound was still fresh and sore, but the same reservation scarcely applies to the confidences made more than twenty years later to Guibert and Condorcet. "How cruel human beings can be!" she writes, in reference to this period of her life. "Tigers are kind in comparison." And again: "I experienced nothing but inhumanity from the very persons who were most bound to show me consideration." At the age of forty, we are seldom inclined, without some fairly strong reason, to throw upon others the undivided blame for past unhappiness.

Julie came at last to the conclusion that this state of things was no longer bearable, and determined to cut it short. It will be remembered that, by her mother's will, provision had been made for enabling her to enter either of the two callings alone recognised as offering an honourable and fairly comfortable existence to women of the better class. But, with the small dowry of 6000 francs bequeathed for this purpose, marriage, except with someone hopelessly her inferior in education and refinement, would have

been out of the question.[1] For her entry into religion, however, this sum might have sufficed, and Madame de Ségur thinks that to "religion" her mind was for an instant turned. In any case it is certain that she wished, provisionally, to become a boarder in some convent, in full confidence that her brother, Camille d'Albon, would increase her annuity of thirteen pounds sufficiently to cover living expenses. "He has always treated me like his own sister," she said about this time to Madame du Deffand. Besides, she was beginning to understand the obligation under which she had laid him by relinquishing her mother's dying gift.

She communicated her decision to Madame de Vichy, by whom it was strongly opposed. Diane had some affection for her young sister, whose devotion to the children she also much appreciated. She pressed her to remain with such genuine kindness that Julie reluctantly consented to defer her departure for some months. It is noteworthy, indeed, that the girl's resentment seems to have been almost wholly directed against the master of the house. "You know my affection for your mother," she wrote, long after, to her favourite pupil, Abel; "she has shown me a great deal of kindness in all sorts of ways." And in the same letter she uses expressions which seem to imply that Madame de Vichy's attitude on the question of the d'Albon inheritance was, in her opinion,

[1] Compare the case of another illegitimate child, whose parents, the Chevalier d'Aydie and the ill-fated Mademoiselle Aïssé, hoped, with the much larger portion of 40,000 francs down, besides 400 of yearly income, to marry her very comfortably *en province*.. To save the necessary amount, both father and mother cheerfully submitted to many privations, for we must not be so unjust as to conclude, from the example of Gaspard de Vichy, that duty and natural affection were always disregarded in such cases.

wholly attributable to Gaspard's influence. Here indeed, more than anywhere else, we may discern the bitter root of that daily wrangling so deeply resented by Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. It is perfectly certain—chimerical as such an idea appears to us—that, in the opinion of the de Vichys, Julie's claim to a share in her mother's property could even yet have been made good in law, and equally certain that the same view was held by the girl herself, to whom it may have been suggested by some confidential retainer of the family in possession of the facts and attached to her interest. Hence, on Gaspard's part, the reluctance, arising from a better motive in his wife, to allow her to escape from his surveillance by leaving Champrond, and hence the perpetual suspicion and miscontruction to which her every action was now exposed.

This most harassing existence had dragged on for more than a year from Julie's first declaration of her intention to seek an asylum elsewhere, when an event occurred which completely changed the current of affairs. Madame du Deffand, sister to the Comte de Vichy, arrived at Champrond on a visit. This remarkable woman, destined to exercise an incalculable influence upon our heroine's fortunes, was now (1752) in her fifty-fifth year. The fame of her intellectual powers, of her brilliant and scathing sarcasm, and her almost unrivalled ability as a conversationalist has endured down to our own day, yet to a modern reader the special interest of her career lies less in these things than in the peculiar facilities which it affords us for studying, as in an abstract, the social code of the society to which she belonged, with its strange tolerances and stranger reservations.

THE MARQUISE DU DEFFAND

BY FORSHEL, AFTER CARMONTELLE

She was born at Champrond, in the year 1697, but her upbringing was by no means that of a country girl. Like most young ladies of her time, she was early sent to a convent school, and only left it on her marriage to the Marquis du Deffand, in 1718. To some compassionate souls this sudden plunge from cloistered seclusion into the difficulties of married life and the social maelstrom of the Regency might seem to furnish an excuse for much of what was to follow; but they would be mightily mistaken in their conjecture. The fashionable Paris convent of that day (and such was La Madeleine du Traisnel where Marie de Vichy received her education) was no abode of Arcadian symplicity nor—to any alarming extent—of innocence. The heads of such institutions were women of high rank, who, despite their vows, had by no means renounced the world. Visitors, of both sexes, found their way frequently within the precincts; exeats, for the pupils at all events, were easily procured; the flow of communication with the outside was uninterrupted, and the latest Court scandal was as likely as not to form the topic of conversation. Grimm relates an extraordinary but quite authentic story of a girl educated at the abbey of Panthémont, who, on the strength of the information gleaned through a school friend in touch with the highest circles, wrote a society novel which was recognised by the fashionable world as so inconveniently true to life that it procured for the author an imprisonment of some months in the Bastille. We may be tolerably certain that Mademoiselle de Vichy was no *ingénue* of the innocent and "sheltered" type when she accepted the husband selected for her by family arrangement and—the marriage scarcely over—decided that, as a husband,

he was impossible. For this prompt conclusion we cannot severely blame her. Monsieur du Deffand was not merely an uninteresting but an aggressively objectionable individual. "He was always taking trouble to make himself disagreeable"—a phrase which, unhappily, sums up the dealings of many better men with their womankind. Considerable latitude, besides, was allowed by public opinion to ladies unsatisfactorily married. It had its limits, however, and though these are, from the modern point of view, as difficult to define as it is for outsiders nowadays to determine the exact length to which a gentleman may go before being expelled from his club, the fact to be noted is that Madame du Deffand contrived to overstep them.

It was then the heyday of the Regency, that time of mad reaction against the sombre restraint imposed by the uncrowned queen, Madame de Maintenon; the period of flowing, voluptuous dress; of all-night galas in the illuminated Cours la Reine and the Regent's Park at St Cloud, and of those unparalleled suppers at the Palais Royal, where the exquisite food was cooked in utensils of silver and the rich wines flowed without stint; where duchesses sat pell-mell with opera dancers, and men of the vilest origin needed but to be witty enough, and shameless enough, to take their places among the highest in the land. As if to the manner born the young Madame du Deffand made her way at once to the very heart of this brilliant, fascinating, and inconceivably corrupt society. She had claims as a beauty no less than as a wit, and she soon won the favour of the Regent himself, who loved her faithfully for at least a fortnight, and, if scandal spoke true, had more than one successor in her affections.

For a time all went gaily, but it seems that, for ladies at anyrate, public opinion drew the line at Palais Royal suppers and St Cloud fêtes. While the Duke of Orleans lived, this was of little importance to Madame du Deffand, but when his death had broken up the circle of which she was a distinguished ornament she found herself an alien and an exile in Paris, and realised that she had made a mistake. Being a very clever woman, she set to work to repair it by seeking a reconciliation with her husband. This last-named gentleman had long ago requested her to leave his house—an exercise of marital self-assertion which rather raises him in our opinion—but he turned a friendly ear to her overtures, and at first all promised well. For six weeks Madame du Deffand made herself as charming to him as she had been to the husbands of other ladies, but at the end of that period she found it impossible, in colloquial phrase, to "keep it up any longer," and the couple parted once more—this time, for good.

Foiled thus in her first design for recovering respectability, the courageous woman had recourse to a second, not quite so strictly in accordance with the conventions of the present century. As a necessary, or at least a desirable, preliminary she obtained a judicial separation from her husband. On what grounds she did so is not quite clear, for she was certainly not the injured party, but as there was no objection on the part of M. du Deffand an amicable arrangement would be easily arrived at. Her next step was to take to herself a lover *en titre*; for such a proceeding was, under certain conditions, held to confer respectability. These conditions were all fulfilled in the present case. Hénault, the person on whom

Madame du Deffand's choice had fallen, and of whom we shall hear more hereafter, was a widower. She herself was as much unmarried as was possible in a country where divorce did not exist. Both cherished the intention of more or less settling down after their stormy youth under the Regency. The outward forms of decorum were by both scrupulously observed (they never, for example, lived under the same roof), and finally the fact that neither of them appears to have been at any time in love with the other imparted to their relations the particular shade of polite indifference appropriate to a genuine marriage *comme il faut*. Apart from this alliance "of convenience," Madame du Deffand's conduct really was, for the rest of her life, irreproachable, and she succeeded in regaining a place in society, though the process was a longer one than we should have expected.

Soon a small but choice company, the friends chiefly of Hénault, gathered around the modest house in the Rue de Beaune where she had taken up her abode. Through Hénault's influence also she gained admission to the so-called "Court" of Sceaux, where for many years her summers were regularly spent. The Duc du Maine, the master of this semi-regal mansion, was a son of Louis XIV. and of Madame de Montespan. His wife, a Bourbon princess, and an attractive though scarcely a lovable woman, had the excellent quality, by no means rare in the great ladies of that period, of admiring talent in others. Her house was recognised as a meeting-ground for all the most brilliant men and women of the day. It was at Sceaux that Madame du Deffand made the acquaintance of the celebrated mathematician, d'Alembert, hereafter to be known as the lover of Julie

LA DUCHESSE DU MAINE (IN CHILDHOOD)

FROM THE PAINTING BY MIGNARD IN THE MUSÉE DE VERSAILLES

de Lespinasse. It was there that Voltaire composed some of his most admired stories, which he read aloud for the amusement of his hostess. His *chère amie*, Madame du Châtelet (whom Sainte-Beuve rather neatly calls a Hypatia minus the virtue and the beauty), pursued her scientific labours in the rooms reserved for her under the same hospitable roof, joining the gay assembly in the *salons* only when the evening was far advanced. Mademoiselle de Launay, the future Madame de Staal, was among the personal attendants of the Duchess.

This miniature court affords us an excellent opportunity for studying the manners and customs of the factitious country life represented by a few great houses. It differed widely indeed from the existence of the genuine country dwellers described in an earlier chapter, being in fact a mere reproduction of the fashionable Parisian routine, with all its pomp and glitter, its late hours, its sedentary amusements, and its quasi-intellectual activities. Card-playing, impromptu verse-making, theatricals, literary readings, and, above all, ceaseless discussion of everything and everybody under heaven were the order of the day and night. The claims of rural surroundings were duly recognised by open-air *fêtes*, boating expeditions, and even by some measure of sport—of the safe and picturesque order, we may surmise. This was the kind of existence which suited Madame du Deffand, which gave full play to her conversational powers, and to her gift of effective and ill-natured epigram, and she was long a *persona grata* at *Sceaux*.

Her visits had, however, grown shorter and fewer for some years before the death of the Duchess du Maine, which took place in 1753. The truth was

that, having gradually acquired a considerable number of interesting acquaintances, she was now meditating the grand move of setting up a *salon* for herself. Her husband had died in 1750. For the liberty thus regained she probably cared little, since neither Hénault nor she had any wish to render their union more binding than it was. But her pecuniary resources, much straitened since the separation, were increased by Monsieur du Deffand's decease, a circumstance which of course facilitated her scheme. But Fortune had a terrible blow in reserve for her. The new *salon* started on its career with every prospect of success, but its mistress meanwhile was struggling against one of the worst calamities which can befall a human being. She was going blind.

Madame du Deffand was not in any sense what by the widest stretch of charity can be called a good woman, but the courage with which she endured this unspeakable affliction is beyond all praise. Scarcely a complaint escaped her. When remedy after remedy had in turn been tried, and all hope of recovery had vanished, she faced the awful prospect with unflinching fortitude, resolved that life should yet yield her some satisfaction. She was determined not to abandon the social position which it had cost her so much effort to obtain, though the increased difficulty of maintaining it weighed heavily on her mind. It was while affairs were in this state that she came to pass a part of the summer with her brother, Gaspard de Vichy. According to M. de Ségur, this was her first visit to Champrond for nearly forty years. She much preferred country life as understood at Sceaux, or at one or two other semi-palatial establishments where she was now on visiting

terms. In spite of Gaspard's attentions—possibly even on account of them—she was not attached to him, and though in after years a tolerably normal aunt to Abel de Vichy, she does not seem at this time to have taken much interest in him or in the other children. Yet some faint undercurrent of family feeling may have led her in this hour of trouble to turn for consolation to her old home, and she came prepared to be agreeable. She brought presents for everybody, and her servants (footman, majordomo, and maid, we may suppose) had strict orders to give no trouble, and in fact, if we are to believe the testimony of their mistress, made themselves more useful in the house than the de Vichys' own domestics—a touch quite in Madame du Deffand's style, and implying a sister's, and perhaps a sister-in-law's, contempt for the efficiency of the "four lackeys, two cooks, coachman and two postillions" of the château.

But there was, after all, only one inmate of Champrond to whom she felt really attracted—the girl with the graceful figure and the expressive face, who looked so sad, and whose eyes seemed to fill unbidden with tears. She found Monsieur and Madame de Vichy fairly communicative on this subject, though how much they at first told her of Julie's real history is uncertain. But it is only doing them justice to say that, behind her back, they spoke very favourably of her. She was such a good girl, and so clever, and so kind to the children! Only, added Gaspard, she had a deplorable fancy to leave her happy home with them and bury herself in a convent. For his, Gaspard's, part he did not much care, but it was a great grief to his wife. Madame du Deffand thought, or affected to think, that Julie's resolution was an unwise one, and

undertook to remonstrate with her. She had taken a strong fancy to this girl, and, as nobody knew how to be more charming than she in such circumstances, she soon won the younger woman's confidence. The bitter tale of injury and insult was poured out to her, and it is a significant fact that she never seemed to doubt its substantial accuracy. For no possible consideration would Julie remain at Champrond. She had written to her brother, and he was to select a convent and arrange for her journey thither. Her new friend drew a discouraging picture of the discomforts attending convent life on an income of thirteen pounds, but always received the same answer: any place on earth would be better than Champrond.

Her departure was, however, delayed till the end of October, two months later than the beginning of Madame du Deffand's visit. During this time they were much together, and as Julie's charm and ability impressed themselves more and more on her companion, it occurred to her that here was the very person who, if transplanted to Paris, might help her in her social projects and at the same time be of singular comfort to herself in her darkness and loneliness. This scheme went, at the time, no further than a hint thrown out at the last moment, and joyfully received, and a promise to write to each other. When at last the carriage and the escort provided by Camille arrived, there was a leavetaking of unexpected poignancy. Not only the children, but their mother and, *mirabile dictu*, their father were dissolved in tears, and entreated the departing guest to abandon, even then, her resolution. Such was the fascination which this singular girl all her life exercised, even on those of whom she had most reason to complain.

CHAPTER V

IN CONVENT WALLS

NATIONAL opinion in France has now decisively pronounced that convents are no longer a necessity, but it is obvious that there, as in other Roman Catholic countries, they formerly fulfilled a threefold purpose of great utility: first, as providing a career for superfluous women; secondly, as educational institutions, and thirdly, as safe and decent boarding-houses for the unprotected female. With regard to the first of these objects, it is sufficient here to observe that Montesquieu, in his "Esprit des Lois," represents the girls of England as being in this respect at a disadvantage compared with those of France, since they had no alternative to a possibly distasteful marriage; and he thus accounts for the greater liberty of matrimonial choice which their parents were obliged in common justice to allow them. As for the second, the services rendered by the convent system in placing girls' schools on a far higher footing socially than was accorded them in England, are not generally recognised. Amongst ourselves, school-teaching was, up to a comparatively recent date, regarded as a profession even more unfit for gentlewomen than private governessing. It is only necessary to recall the contempt with which Jane Austen's "Emma" dismisses *a priori* the social claims of "a teacher in a school," though, where governesses in families like Jane Fairfax and Mrs Weston are

concerned, she is content to judge each case on its individual merits. In France, thanks to the convents, no such feeling existed. Ladies of the highest rank might, and often did, "enter religion," and where their choice fell on a teaching order of nuns they might quite easily act as schoolmistresses. This was *a fortiori* the case with that numerous class of well-born women who took the veil because their impoverished though aristocratic parents could not afford to establish them otherwise in life, and who were naturally expected to supplement the small "dowry" they brought with them by some service to their convent.

Even to teachers of a lower social grade a certain priestige was imparted by the religious habit, unattainable by women in Protestant countries, but closely resembling that conferred upon men by taking Holy Orders; without which even Dr Arnold thought that it would be hard for a schoolmaster to get himself recognised as a gentleman. The same social superiority may be predicated of the pupils as of the mistresses. The greatest men in the land habitually sent their daughters to school, which, even now, is not the case in England. The[1] two great Abbeys of Fontevrault and Panthémont held a position which may without violence be compared to that of Eton and Harrow. The children of the greatest nobles, nay, princesses of the blood-royal, were among their scholars; and though they lived in great state, each girl having her own maid and her private governess, all wore the[2] simple school uniform and were proud

[1] According to the brothers Goncourt, the Convent of the Presentation was only a little below that of Panthémont in importance. But Panthémont is most often mentioned in the memoirs of the period.

[2] An over and under skirt of brown stuff, the bodice, alas! tight-fitting and well armed with whalebone, and a white cap edged with lace.

to be members of communities so distinguished. Next came the many less imposing but still aristocratic institutions, such as La Madeleine du Traisnel, mentioned in the last chapter, and then the long roll of quiet, unpretentious religious houses, where the young *bourgeoises* received their education.

The mixture of classes, always a desirable object, must, by the French system, have been in some measure secured, especially when the distinction was one of money rather than of birth. Thus, Mademoiselle d'Albert, the girl-novelist, already mentioned, was a penniless gentlewoman admitted to Panthémont as a relative of the Abbess, and she became the familiar friend of Mademoiselle de Rohan, a daughter of one of the greatest houses of France, who stood by her loyally through the storm which followed on the libellous novel and procured her release from the Bastille and a pension. As between nobility and *bourgeoisie*, doubtless, the line of demarcation would be more strictly drawn, yet Duclos' lamentation that, in convent schools, birth was always favoured, and girls thus missed the wholesome experience sometimes allowed to boys of seeing brains fairly pitted against blood, seems to show that the two orders were not irrevocably separated, and indeed in provincial convents such rigour would have been impossible. Thus, the gulf between girls of the upper and middle classes would be less pronounced than it then was in England.

The educational activity of the nuns was not bounded by either of these classes. Secular schools for the children of the poor were certainly not unknown. Félicité de Saint-Aubyn learned to read from the village schoolmistress, and the country schoolmaster buying

a second-hand wig in Paris, wherewith to overawe his pupils on his return, is mentioned by Mercier as a familiar figure of those times. But both in the capital and the provinces numbers of convents, besides their school for young ladies,[1] had another for the daughters of the people, whom they taught gratuitously. It was at the little local convent of Bort that Marmontel's peasant mother received her education, such as it was, and he himself was by special favour admitted to learn his first rudiments there.

It is, however, the third intent of conventual institutions with which we are here chiefly concerned, and the fiercest Protestant will not deny that in this capacity they supplied a want then much felt in England, where the ordinary lodging-house or inn was as unsafe for solitary women as in France, and yet no alternative was provided. How different, for example, might have been the fate of Clarissa, if she could have taken refuge in a convent, where she would certainly have been protected from Lovelace, and, having in view her grandfather's estate, probably from the Harlowes also! For a girl in the position of Julie de Lespinasse it was well to have such an asylum to fall back upon. But there was this drawback, that though living in a quiet provincial convent, such as that selected for her at Lyon by her brother, was probably as inexpensive as anywhere, thirteen pounds a year were, as Madame du Deffand had warned her, insufficient even there to live upon comfortably; for her expectations of a supplementary allowance from Camille were doomed to disappoint-

[1] As a testimony to the good work done by the religious orders in educating the people we may note that out of five servants mentioned in the will of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse (1776) only one, a charwoman, was unable to sign her own name in receipt of the legacy bequeathed.

ment. It is true that thirty years earlier we find a protegée of Madame de Maintenon received in a similar institution for half that sum, but food had grown dearer since then, and she was, moreover, only entitled to a room, without furniture, to buy which Madame de Maintenon allowed her fifty francs (£2). Besides, nobody's budget can be so framed as to include only the bare cost of living. In such surroundings the great clothes question would not, for a long time, become pressing, especially as we may hope that Madame de Vichy's "kindness" had extended to some reinforcement of her sister's wardrobe. But it was considered necessary at stated times (probably New Year) to give some presents to the servants of the community. And even under a scheme of things in which tea-shops and omnibuses have no place, nobody could exist wholly without pocket-money, if only to have a penny to bestow now and then among the piteous throngs of beggars who were everywhere in evidence. Manon Phlipon, the future Madame Roland, when reduced by a quarrel with her father to very similar circumstances, took the course of simply renting, for sixty francs yearly, a bedroom in the convent, and doing her own marketing and cooking; her fare consisting chiefly of rice, potatoes, and haricot beans "dressed in a saucepan with salt and a little butter"—which last is a dainty dish enough. But Manon had been carefully trained by her mother to housekeeping, as housekeeping is understood in an establishment of one servant, an advantage not possessed by Julie, who could attempt no such heroic measures. We are not surprised to find that she was obliged to share a bedroom with one or more companions, an experience which may have led her to the

opinion that there were other places of residence on earth not much better than the Château of Champrond. In the absence of definite information we can only wonder whether she was further reduced to take her meals in the bare barrack of a room which served as general refectory or could afford the more *recherché* table of the Abbess, to which that favoured section of the schoolgirls proper denominated in England "parlour-boarders" was admitted.

We must not imagine that the average convent was, for lay persons, at all a duller place of residence than is the ordinary modern boarding-house, English or foreign, "for ladies only." There was, in the first place, a greater variety among the inmates: every age was there represented, from the little toddling child, whose parents were glad to be rid of it, to the grey-haired widow bringing with her the experience of a long life spent in the outer world. Between these two extremes were the schoolchildren under discipline; the older girls who had "finished their education," but were left in this safe asylum till their relations could see some possibility of establishing them in life; the single women of all ages who could not, with decorum, live elsewhere; the young married ladies whose husbands were away on military service, and so on through an inexhaustible list of gradations. The chances of falling upon congenial company were thus obviously considerable, and we accordingly find that "convent friendships," often of a very enduring description, play a large part in the memoirs of the day.

Nor were pleasures of a less grave cast entirely lacking. As regards the nuns themselves their share of social gaiety would, save in a few communities of

the worldly and not over-respectable class already glanced at, be limited to such innocent festivities as the ball given by Madame de Genlis, at which the sisters danced "gentlemen" with the pupils and enjoyed themselves immensely, or the garden fête so graphically described in Madame Roland's memoirs, where all went merry as a marriage bell till the convent doctor, by special permission, appeared on the scene, and spoiled everything, by reviving the necessity for decorous behaviour! But for adult boarders, and even for the elder schoolgirls, a good deal of contact with the outer world was possible. There was practically no limit to the number of visitors they might receive, though where these were of the wrong sex the interview had to take place across the "parlour" grating. But that this was no bar to friendly conversation, nor even to a certain amount of lovemaking, we have sufficient evidence. It was through the *grille* that the mother of Madame de Genlis first made acquaintance with her future husband, while he was visiting his mother, then a fellow-boarder in the convent where she herself had been placed by her relations in the vain hope that she might be induced to take the veil. Mademoiselle de Launay (Madame de Staal) had at least one gentleman friend who frequently visited her in her convent at Rouen and carried on a fairly lively flirtation with her across the dividing bars. It was, in fact, no uncommon thing for friendships of this kind to be formed in the first instance at the convent grate. The ordinary *parloir* was a long room divided down the middle by the *grille*, and several interviews often took place at the same time. It frequently happened that a visitor at one opening would become interested in the conversation being carried on at

another, and ask his interlocutor for an introduction, and *vice versa*. The facilities thus afforded for pleasant and, we may add, innocent flirtation are obvious. This writer can testify that in the English ladies' colleges of the so-called nineteenth century, a much smaller measure of hospitality was extended to visitors of the opposite sex.

During the daytime the pensionnaires seem to have gone in and out pretty much as they liked, children and young girls specially entrusted to the charge of the convent authorities being of course excepted. But it was necessary to be indoors by a rather early hour in the evening; this at the Lyon convent being six P.M. That this rule, however, was not invariably enforced is plain from the example of Mademoiselle de Launay, whose patroness, the Duchesse de la Ferté, used often to take her out of her convent at Paris for the day and bring her back at very uncanonical hours. (The Abbess herself sat up to open the doors on these occasions, lest the community should be scandalised.) The same lady tells us that during her stay at the Rouen convent she often went to visit some former schoolfellows living near, and was usually escorted back by a common friend, of the masculine persuasion, who in the earlier stages of their acquaintance always took her home the longest way, but later showed the diminution of his affection by preferring a short cut. It is probable that this took place in the daytime and certain that the distance to be traversed was, even at its longest, a short one. But, granting all this, a degree of freedom is indicated by the episode which compares favourably with modern French etiquette as applied to *jeunes filles*.

It is likely enough that Julie would receive a certain number of invitations from old acquaintances made during occasional sojourns at Lyon in her mother's lifetime, and especially from the provincial *noblesse*, who came there, as they themselves had done, for a change from their lonely châteaux; for we can scarcely suppose that even the more wealthy among the *bourgeoisie* of Lyon (already famed for the silk-weaving industry) would be on the Comtesse d'Albon's visiting-list. It is plain, however, that she derived no pleasure from any hospitality which may have been shown her in this manner. In after years she cherished an intense aversion, dating evidently from this period of her career, for the social life of provincial towns, professing to find it far less supportable than the absolute solitude of the country. "I quite agree with the horror you express for a provincial existence," she writes to Guibert; "but the provinces are not the country. I would rather live in a village, with none to talk to but the peasants, than enjoy the select society of a country town." In the particular case of Lyon, her antipathy was much increased, and perhaps originally produced, by the notoriety there attaching to the miserable story of her birth. It would almost seem as if she may have regretted the rural solitude of Champrond, but with the arrival of spring there came a pleasant interlude in her unpleasing existence.

Madame du Deffand, finding her brother's house intolerably dull when Julie's presence was withdrawn, had remained there for only about another month—a trifling item in the visits of the eighteenth century. She went no further, however, than the town of Maçon, where she spent the greater part of the winter

at the house of a friend, and in the month of April she came for ten days to Lyon. Julie, with whom she had maintained an assiduous correspondence, was the avowed object of this sojourn, and while it lasted the girl spent every day at her new friend's lodging, arriving at eleven and departing at six—these being apparently the limits between which the convent gates remained open. On one of these days she encountered the Archbishop of Lyon, Cardinal de Tencin, who had come to pay his respects to Madame du Deffand, and who, at this last-named lady's desire, wrote a letter to the Abbess of Julie's convent requesting that this pensionnaire, in whom he was specially interested, might be allowed the luxury of a room to herself. As patronage was then all-powerful in France this recommendation was complied with, but the amelioration thus produced in the girl's position was but a small thing compared with the sweeping change contemplated by Madame du Deffand.

The project which, almost from the first, she had vaguely entertained of attaching the girl in some manner to herself took definite shape in a proposal that she should come to live with her as a companion. In Julie's position this was a most attractive offer, and she seems to have been at first almost intoxicated at the prospect. But it is plain that some qualms of doubt soon supervened. Her past experience might well make her shy of again accepting a dependent position of this sort, and though Madame du Deffand had been very kind to her she was too quickwitted not to have noticed signs of that imperious and exacting temper which made the brilliant Marquise a difficult person to live with. Still, the project was

CARDINAL DE TENCIN

FROM AN ENGRAVING AFTER THE PAINTING IN THE MUSÉE DE VERSAILLES

irresistibly alluring to her; and, indeed, what else was she to do?—continue her present pinched and objectless existence, or return, like the prodigal, to Champrond, where her old post still awaited her? We can never hope to understand the women of that epoch unless we fully realise how utterly desperate was the position of all those who had not enough money to live upon and who were by circumstances, or their own reluctance, debarred from the two spheres already particularised—matrimony and "religion." The chance of marriage had not come Julie's way, and if she had ever thought of being a nun she no longer regarded such a solution of the problem as possible. The thousand devices by which educated women now eke out a scanty income were then literally non-existent. There certainly were cases in which money was earned by writing plays and novels, and we hear of one lady who, having devoted her tiny capital to acquiring an imperfect knowledge of English, made a living by translating from that language. But for openings of this sort it was essential to be in Paris and to have influential patronage, without which such literature had small chance of a sale. Besides, authorship as a profession for women was then held in worse repute than the stage is now held amongst ourselves, and apparently with more reason. Visiting teaching was almost entirely monopolised by men. Manon Phlipon, when placed in much the same situation as Julie, did entertain some faint hope of getting pupils, but owned that this was extremely unlikely. Painting on satin and on fans, embroidery and suchlike minor arts were regarded as possible, though very doubtful, resources by many impoverished women. But Mademoiselle de Lespinasse does not appear to have possessed any

accomplishments of this kind.[1] Her sight was far from strong, a circumstance which, combined with her love of reading, may have prevented her from acquiring the manual skill necessary for such occupations. In great families ladies were sometimes employed as governesses or secretaries, but here again it was necessary to have interest, and situations of this sort were regarded as scarcely one remove better than domestic service. For a girl in Julie's circumstances the chances were all against obtaining any situation half so promising as that offered by Madame du Deffand. Besides, she was still under the charm of the older woman's manner, enhanced by gratitude for the kindness shown her and compassion for the terrible affliction so courageously endured. Apart from all personal considerations, she might well feel it no unworthy lifework to devote herself to brightening an existence thus shadowed. Her consent was therefore readily given, and Madame du Deffand, delighted with this reception of her offer, set to work with a will to carry the project into execution. Here, however, she was to encounter difficulties, partly foreseen, but greater probably than she had anticipated, and the negotiations dragged on for another twelvemonth before being finally completed.

[1] We never hear of her taking up any of the various kinds of fancy-work in vogue, not even the fashionable mania for "parfilage" (*i.e.* unpicking epaulettes, etc., stolen from male friends, for the sake of the gold thread), by which Madame du Deffand was carried away. In her portrait she is apparently engaged in knotting, a very popular pursuit for ladies, but this may be due to the painter's fancy.

CHAPTER VI

AN OPENING IN LIFE

BEFORE receiving Julie as a member of her household, Madame du Deffand considered it advisable to obtain the consent of Camille d'Albon, who seems to have claimed the rights, while neglecting the duties, of guardianship to his unacknowledged sister. As she had no personal acquaintance with this gentleman she confided her intention to a friend of the family resident at Lyon, entreating her to act as intermediary. This lady received the proposition with a coldness tantamount to a refusal. Not content with assuming a neutral attitude, she straightway wrote to the de Vichys to acquaint them with the scheme which was on foot, thereby overwhelming them with consternation. Madame du Deffand had scarcely returned to Maçon after her brief stay at Lyon when she received a letter from Gaspard, declaring that he would never consent to the proposed arrangement, and violently reproaching his sister for her treachery, as he considered it, towards himself. His attitude was in some slight measure due to a not unnatural resentment at having a useful member of his household, whom he and his wife did not despair of recovering, thus spirited away by the very person who had originally volunteered to persuade her to remain with them. But a far more powerful factor was his old fear concerning the d'Albon inheritance. Once well away from his guardian care, and safe in Paris,

the headquarters of wire-pulling and patronage, what might not this brilliant and spirited girl, so eminently calculated to win friends, be able to effect in the way of asserting her claim? No doubt he even suspected his sister of designing to support her new protégée as against the rest of the family. Julie was, after all, her niece, and she might even adopt her (she had in fact sent word to Camille that she promised to treat her as a daughter), and bequeath to her the money on which the de Vichys securely reckoned.

It is very likely that the bond of relationship did, as M. de Ségur suggests, count for something in the attraction felt by the childless Marquise for this worse than orphaned girl. But, whatever may have been her own testamentary intentions, Gaspard was quite wrong in supposing that she ever thought of embroiling herself with him and the d'Albons, by supporting any claim of the kind just alluded to. She had been prepared, however, for his attack, and was quite equal to the occasion. She replied to his charge of treachery by explaining that she did not recognise any right, either on his part or his wife's, over Julie de Lespinasse, who had left them of her own free will and was certainly bound to them by no tie of gratitude. She did not consider their consent in any way necessary, and though she had been on the point of writing to acquaint them with the contemplated move (which by the way is rather doubtful), it was only as a matter of politeness. She even hinted that their fears concerning the inheritance were a mere pretext to cover their desire to be revenged on the girl for not having sufficiently appreciated the happiness of a home under their roof. She condescended, however, to combat their anxiety on this

head, arguing that it would be really in their interest to get Julie away from Lyon, where, her parentage (on the mother's side at least) being well known, she was more likely to find sympathisers. At Paris she would be quite out of her bearings and Madame du Deffand undertook to keep a strict watch on her goings out and comings in.

These representations had no effect upon the de Vichys, who continued vehemently to oppose the projected arrangement. Camille d'Albon, to whom his sister had written direct upon the failure of the first attempt to treat with him, was equally strenuous in his objections, which were grounded upon a similar apprehension. No decisive step could be taken till Madame du Deffaud had finished her round of country visits and returned to Paris. This she did not do till October of the same year (1753), and Julie meanwhile remained in her convent; for, though she had a standing invitation to Champrond for every summer, it is scarcely likely that she availed herself of it. She had ample time to reflect upon the project which had seemed at first so full of promise, and, though she was encouraged in it by the aged Cardinal Archbishop (who remained her friend and visited her sometimes at the convent grate), it evidently did not gain by closer contemplation. She wrote to Madame du Deffand confessing that the thought of Paris alarmed her. She was well accustomed to a dreary life of isolation and dependence in the lonely country, but would not the same isolation and dependence be harder to bear in the great world, and amid people enjoying a lot far different from her own? "I fear," she wrote, "that I might become so depressed that I should only be a burden to you, and you would repent

of having taken me." The infinite pathos of these words, which in their hopelessness born of a miserable experience remind us of Charlotte Brontë, had a strong effect on Madame du Deffand, and called forth a most kind and sympathetic reply. Indeed, if we would see this remarkable woman at her very best, it is at this stage of the relation with her young protégée. She gently rebukes the girl for supposing that the frankness with which she had expressed herself could give offence; plain speaking on both sides was of all things most to be desired. Then she proceeds to sketch the position which Julie was to hold under her roof in terms calculated to rob it of any terror on the score of neglect or slighting treatment:

"I shall not tell anyone beforehand that you are coming to me. I shall tell the people who see you at the beginning that you are a young lady from my own province, in search of a convent in which to board, and that I have offered you a room till you can look round and find what will suit you. When strangers are present, I shall treat you not only with politeness but with ceremony, to make people from the first understand that they must do the same. I shall only explain the real state of the case to a very few friends, and after three, or four, or five months we shall both know how we suit each other, and we can then be franker with the world about our intentions. I shall take good care all along not to appear to be trying to force you upon people; what I intend to do is to make people anxious to have you, and if you know me you will have no fear that your self-respect will suffer in my hands. But you must trust to my knowledge of the world. If people knew

from the first that you were come to live with me for good, I could not be sure (even were I a much greater lady than I am) of getting them to treat you as I should wish. Some might think you were my own daughter, others a mere humble companion, and unpleasant things might be said. The essential thing is to begin by establishing your position on the strength of your own merits, and this you will do easily with my help and that of my friends, but you must make up your mind to encounter some difficulties at the beginning. . . . You have plenty of brains, you can be lively, and you are not wanting in feeling. With all these good gifts you will be charming, if you only allow yourself to be natural."

This letter must have done a good deal towards overcoming Julie's reluctance. But the opposition of her family had some weight with her, and she had determined to settle the matter by forcing a decisive explanation with the Comte d'Albon who was shortly expected at Lyon. If he would guarantee her a sufficient allowance to live upon in comfort she would give up the Paris project; if not, she reserved the right of doing what she pleased. Madame du Deffand, though this plan was contrary to her own wishes, encouraged her in it by saying that the whole world would cry shame upon Camille if he refused her request for a pension. Yet this was exactly what he did. His conduct, doubtless admits of some palliation. During his father's lifetime, as M. de Ségur tells us, he did not enter into full possession of the d'Albon estate, and he had recently married for love, a laudable proceeding, but one which does not incline a man to generosity towards his own family. Yet, making all allowance for these extenuating circum-

stances, we cannot feel that his conduct in this matter says much for either his sense of justice or the goodness of his heart. The interview between the brother and sister was evidently of a most painful nature. While finally crushing Julie's hopes of any pecuniary resistance, the Count exerted all his supposed authority to prevent her from seeking a home with Madame du Deffand.[1] No doubt, he told her that it was very wicked and discontented of her not to be able to get on with the de Vichys, and that if she would not live with them she must make the most of her thirteen pounds a year, which was quite a comfortable income for a single woman. Endearing speeches of this sort have from time immemorial been recognised as the peculiar prerogative of relationship, but it is plain that Julie did not take them well. Her affectionate confidence in the playfellow of happier days long gone had hitherto maintained itself in the face of every species of discouragement, but it gave way now and for ever. "I ought by right to receive assistance from the d'Albons," she wrote, shortly before her death, in her last will and testament, "not as a benefaction, but in restitution for the trust-money of which M. d'Albon robbed me on the death of my mother and his," and these words accurately indicate the light in which this once beloved brother henceforth appeared to her. It is infinitely to her credit that she never at any time contemplated the form of revenge which would have been most felt by Camille—an assertion, namely, of her much-dreaded hereditary claim. It is true that Madame du Deffand, rather frightened by

[1] We may surmise that he did not counsel her in favour of a husband or the veil, since either step would have involved the paying down on his part of the 6000 francs left for those purposes.

the hysterical protests of her family, had taken the precaution of repeatedly requiring her solemnly and wholly to abjure any such claim before coming to Paris, desiring her on one occasion to formulate this renunciation in a letter which could thus be shown "in case of need." Yet Madame du Deffand, at the very time when she was exacting these pledges, was writing to her aunt and adviser, Madame de Luynes: "I am not such a fool as to flatter myself that any reason of friendship, gratitude, or fear could prevent her from asserting her claim, if there was any possibility of doing so, but as there is none" (owing to the *surveillance* which her patroness was to exercise over her), "and as she has plenty of brains, I quite believe that she will make no such attempt." So much did her ingrained cynicism mislead her as to the true character of this girl whom, nevertheless, she regarded with a degree of affection unusual with her. During the first year of her residence in Paris, Julie may have have been as helpless as is here predicted, but when she had become one of the social powers of the great metropolis, and was surrounded by troops of influential friends, we know that she remained equally faithful to her plighted word. She herself said, long after, that she was far from deserving the praises which had been lavished on her for this self-abnegation. The sacrifice had been made mainly to her mother's reputation, and had not cost her much. We may, indeed, conjecture that one cause for her hatred of Lyon was the number of gossiping, though doubtless half-sympathetic, comments on "that dear and honoured memory" to which she had been forced to listen, coupled, perhaps, with well-meant exhortations to stand up for her rights. She may well have rejoiced

at the prospect of never hearing the matter mentioned more.

Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was naturally no longer inclined to consider as binding her brother's prohibition on the subject of Madame du Deffand,[1] and she rejoiced the heart of that lady by an unqualified assent. There was still need, however, of some diplomacy to frustrate the counter-intrigues of the de Vichys, and Madame du Deffand, while writing to beg that Cardinal de Tencin would arrange for Julie's journey to Paris, judged it prudent to advise her not to impart her purpose to anyone at Lyon till the very day of setting out. The good-natured Archbishop presently discovered a very suitable escort, in the Solicitor-General of Lyon, who, accompanied by his wife, was going on an expedition to the capital immediately after Easter. To their charge he confided the young girl, and towards the end of April, 1754, she started on her way in a state of excitement which is not difficult to imagine, and which, we may easily believe, was mainly of a pleasurable kind.

It was her first long journey, and it was made by diligence, a circumstance indicating that the worthy solicitor had not too much money to throw away. Duclos, in his memoirs, laments the degenerate luxury into which the age had sunk, as exemplified by the sinfully extravagant fashion of travelling by post-chaise. In *his* young days (he was born in 1704) everyone travelled by public coaches (such as the

[1] She was then twenty-one years old, having been born in November, 1732, while the interview with Camille took place in February or March, 1754; except in Normandy, however, twenty-five was the legal age of majority, but this had reference rather to property than to liberty of the person.

Lyon-Paris diligence), now even junior officers, were ashamed to be seen in them! The post-chaise system was certainly not adapted to small incomes if we may judge by the experience of Arthur Young, who reckoned the cost for a party of two at about one shilling per English mile, in which estimate inn-charges are, however, included. There were other methods of travelling, the most *chic* of which was of course to take your own carriage, generally with post-horses. At the opposite end of the scale came what was known as the *messagerie—i.e.* parcels post or carriers' cart—which was cheaper even than the diligence, a homely mode of conveyance to which King Stanilaus of Poland himself, according to Duclos, on one occasion condescended. Nor must we forget the litter in which Madame de Neuillant was borne from Niort to Paris (a century before Julie's journey thither), while her niece, Françoise d'Aubigné, rode, postillion fashion, on one of the two mules which supported it behind and before, and thus made her first entry into the great city, where, as Madame de Maintenon, she was to become virtually Queen of France. This primitive vehicle had by no means entirely disappeared. We find it used about the year 1730, in a country district, by Cardinal de Tencin himself, and Marmontel, more than ten years later, travelled from Toulouse to Paris by a similar method. It was esteemed an easier conveyance, especially on bad roads, than the jolting wheeled carriage of the day, but Marmontel assures us that he would much have preferred travelling by *messagerie*, "on a good horse in the open-air," from which we gather that he would have ridden, like Mademoiselle d'Aubigné, on one of the horses drawing the carrier's cart. The swaying of the litter had, he

says, a tendency to produce sickness, especially if you sat on the front seat; for the vehicle in this case held two. The journey by *messagerie* would have cost exactly the same—120 francs; for, though the litter was more expensive, his travelling companion, a comparatively rich young man, bore the lion's share of the charges, indemnifying himself by the process which in modern masculine parlance is known as "putting on side." The terms included food, which the honest muleteer with whom they had contracted provided in most generous fashion, feasting them on "red partridges, turkeys and truffles." We may mention here the case of another celebrated person, the Abbé Morellet, who, in 1741, made *his* first journey to Paris, starting from the same neighbourhood as Julie, mainly by river and canal. He was furnished from home with a supply of provisions, of which the boatmen, far different from Marmontel's muleteer, contrived to defraud him.

Young, generally so exact in noting what he paid for everything *en route* has unluckily omitted to mention the cost of travelling by diligence. But concerning the attractions offered by that mode of progression he expresses himself with no uncertain voice. "This is the first French diligence I have been in, and shall be the last; they are detestable."[1] His travelling companions on this occasion, Calais to Paris (1789), seem to have been six in number, and of both sexes. He complains that they were very noisy, stunned him with perpetual singing, played cards and cheated over them. They comprised two foreign merchants and a

[1] Note that this was written *after* the reforms effected by Turgot in the construction of public coaches. When Julie de Lespinasse made her journey the diligences must have been considerably more "detestable."

French governess returning from Ireland, persons of sufficiently respectable standing, but contemptuously classed by him among "the rabble which are sometimes met in diligences." Sometimes, it seems, they travelled on through the night, and sometimes stopped to sleep, and his views on the French inns of that period are of much interest. "On an average," he says, "they are better in two respects and worse in all the rest, than those in England." The first point of superiority was in the important matter of the commissariat, which was much better than could have been got for the same money in England.

"The common cookery of the French gives great advantage. It is true they roast everything to a chip if they are not cautioned: but they give such a number and variety of dishes, that if you do not like some, there are others to please your palate. The dessert at a French inn has no rival at an English one; nor are the liqueurs to be despised. We sometimes have met with bad wine, but, upon the whole, far better than such port as English inns give. Beds are better in France; in England they are good only at good inns; and we have none of that torment, which is so perplexing in England, to have the sheets aired; for we never trouble our heads about them, doubtless on account of the climate. After these two points all is a blank, you have no parlour to eat in; only a room with two, three, or four beds. Apartments badly fitted up; the walls whitewashed; or paper of different sorts in the same room; or tapestry so old as to be a fit nidus for moths and spiders; and the furniture such that an English innkeeper would light his fire with it. . . . Bells there are none; the *fille* must always be bawled for; and when

she appears, is neither neat, well-dressed, nor handsome."

Fortified with these picturesque details we have no great difficulty in reconstructing that momentous journey of our heroine's. Young travelled the distance from Lyon to Paris, which he reckons at 300 English miles, in six days, or about the number of hours in which it can now be traversed by rail. The excellent Arthur indulged himself on this occasion in the extra expense of a post-chaise, but as he stopped by the way to view all objects of interest which presented themselves it is probable that he would have got over the ground quicker by coach,[1] for on the journey from Calais to Paris above alluded to, the diligence covered 78 miles the first day, and 102 in the following day and night. Julie was requested by Madame du Deffand to write to her from Châlons that she might know what day to expect her arrival. At the coach office she would no doubt find her employer's carriage awaiting her, and we may suppose that either Mademoiselle Devreux, that lady's confidential maid, or Wiart, her secretary, who seems to have been regarded merely in the light of an upper servant, was sent to take charge of the bewildered country girl, and her (presumably scanty) effects. One would gladly know her impressions during her first drive through the narrow, crowded, noisy streets of Paris. It ended in the Rue St Dominique, on the left side of the river, at the spot now occupied by the buildings of the Ministry of War, but then by the Convent of St Joseph, where Madame du Deffand had for some time rented an apartment. That the weary

[1] Before Turgot's reforms, above-mentioned, the diligences were said to travel nearly as slowly again.

traveller had a kind reception there can be no manner of doubt. Only a few days before the Marquise had written: "Pack up your boxes, my love, and come and be the happiness and consolation of my life. It shall be not my fault if I do not do the same by you." The sympathising spectator may well feel saddened by reflecting on the ultimate outcome of this friendship begun under auspices apparently the most promising.

CHAPTER VII

"THE FLAUNTING TOWN"

IT must not be supposed that Madame du Deffand's position in regard to the Convent of St Joseph had any analogy with that of the inside boarders who have been mentioned in a former chapter. It was very usual for religious houses to let out a part of their building to tenants of both sexes, who were bound by no regulations of any kind, had no dealings with the sisters in the interior, kept their own servants, entertained their friends, and went in and out as they pleased all through the day and night. The Convent had a large amount of accommodation available for inmates of this sort, and among their number we find, at one time or another, the names of several fairly distinguished persons, not all of them remarkable for saintliness of demeanour, nor even all belonging to one sex; for example, Mademoiselle Clairon, the celebrated actress, Charles Edward the Pretender, and, in the previous century, Madame de Montespan, who was, in truth, the pious foundress of the community. The apartment which this last-named lady had in her lifetime reserved for herself was the one now occupied by Madame du Deffand, and was situated in a wing apart from the convent proper surrounding a separate courtyard provided with an entrance of its own, so that the sacred *clôture* of the sisters might be in no way interfered with.

In this pleasant and far from austere retreat, the

Marquise had established herself, as it proved, for the rest of her life. Since her husband's death, her revenue from various sources amounted to about 37,000 francs, or over £1600, an income which to most of us does not, I suspect, even in these days, appear wholly contemptible, and which was then equivalent to a much larger sum. She could afford, as the cant phrase goes, "to live her own life," and this life, though in essentials perfectly irreproachable (for even Hénault had now ceased to be more than a friend), was of as unconventional a description as we can well imagine. For a girl of Julie's upbringing it must have been indeed a strange existence which she was called upon to share, an existence bewildering, dazzling, in some respects irksome, in others wholly delightful. We can imagine nothing quite like it in our own day, and even then it was considered in some respects unique. Madame du Deffand had always regarded solitude and the company of her own thoughts as among the greatest of earthly ills, and in this mental attitude she was still further confirmed by her increasing blindness. To this last-named cause, and to her habit of insomnia (then as now very frequent in fashionable circles), may doubtless be traced the extraordinary mania which led her literally to turn night into day. For her the day commenced regularly at six o'clock in the evening, the hour at which she first quitted her bedroom. Then began the stream of visitors, including all the most brilliant and interesting persons in Paris, some of whom will frequently appear in these pages. If the mistress of the house had no engagement out of doors, this reception went on till long after midnight, but often she went out to supper at the houses of friends

in Paris or in the suburbs, or earlier in the evening to the theatre. Play and opera then began at six P.M., or before, and were over at eight or soon after, well before the time of the evening meal, which was often later than nine. It was the favourite repast of Madame du Deffand, who, as a natural result of her noctivagant habits, eschewed the midday dinners which were a fashionable form of entertainment in some circles. When she was not invited out to supper, or more properly, perhaps, when she did not care to accept an invitation, she always entertained a few friends round her own hospitable board, and once a week, on a stated day, gave a banquet on a larger scale, which held a respectable place among the social fixtures of the period. When, on evenings at home, the last guest had departed, or when she had returned from her gaieties abroad, the hour being in both cases about two or three A.M., it was still too early to think of bed, and through the rest of the night she had to find amusement as she could, by her own solitary fireside.

This curious life was shared in all its fullness by Julie de Lespinasse, for Madame du Deffand abode most honourably by her undertaking that the girl should rank as a real companion, and not as an upper-grade menial. She was not primarily engaged even as a secretary.[1] That office belonged of right to Wiart, the majordomo already mentioned, an honest and devoted retainer, who never dreamt of considering himself a gentleman. It is certain that Julie did frequently write and read Madame du Deffand's letters to and from intimate friends, but

[1] Madame du Deffand sometimes wrote her own letters with the help of an apparatus contrived for keeping the lines straight. The writing was large, but quite legible.

LES CHATS DE MADAME DU DEFFAND

(SHEWING HER BEDROOM AT ST. JOSEPH)

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY COCHIN IN THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE

this seems to have arisen naturally from the circumstance that they were friends to her as well as to her patroness, and that communication could thus on both sides be carried on with greater ease and freedom than through the medium of a social inferior. Reading aloud may have been to some extent part of the agreement, since after Julie had quitted St Joseph we find her place supplied by a *lectrice en titre.* It was resorted to mainly as a means of passing the hours between the return home of Madame du Deffand, or the departure of her guests, and the time when she thought herself likely to sleep. There is no doubt that this service was felt by the girl as a heavy burden, though we may hope that she was sometimes allowed to go to bed before her patroness, especially when some heroic exertion in the matter of early rising was required of her that same morning. For example, in a letter written to Madame du Deffand, then away in the country, she observes that as it is now after 1 A.M. she had better not sit up any longer, since she must go to church the following day (Sunday), and also intends to take a bath. A Saturday half holiday of this kind may perhaps have been a fairly usual institution, for the Marquise herself had now begun to attend Mass regularly as an essential factor in the respectable life.

On ordinary occasions the working day did not begin before six P.M., the hour of Madame du Deffand's first appearance. The initial difficulty of sleeping in the daytime being once overcome, Julie would thus have sufficient leisure for repose, and, under the guardianship of some trusted friends of the house, might even take exercise, as exercise was then

understood by Parisian ladies, in one or other of the public gardens. Of these the Tuileries and the Palais Royal were the most fashionable, the Luxembourg being favoured rather by the *bourgeoisie*, and the Jardin du Roi, now the Botanical Garden, by such eccentric persons as preferred fresh air and quiet to the joys of seeing and being seen. Sunset was the correct hour for the promenade, and the programme was to drive as far as the gates (walking in the streets being indeed well-nigh an impossibility), and then to alight from your carriage and walk with your party up and down under the trees, sometimes completely blocking up the pathway, which was only guaranteed to hold four crinolines abreast. It was a recognised opportunity for meeting one's friends, male as well as female, and there was much exchanging of greetings, and stopping for a minute to talk, or joining other parties, and when the weather was warm enough the benches[1] were filled with rows of well-dressed people, chatting at their ease, and criticising the costumes of those who continued walking. Two or three times we find Mademoiselle de Lespinasse enjoying this exhilarating recreation, and as she was in some respects very much of her century it was probably sufficient to satisfy her demands in the matter of air and exercise.

The real work of the day began, as we have seen, at six P.M. and continued all night and every night, for Julie almost from the first seems to have been included in invitations to Madame du Deffand. That lady's prediction that people would soon be glad to

[1] Up to 1760 wooden benches were the only seats, but in that year some thousands of chairs, to be hired, were introduced, and the benches came to be considered low.

have her for her own sake was abundantly verified, and it is but just to the older woman to say that she did all in her power to promote this state of things. We are thus brought face to face with the commonplace consideration that the thirteen pounds a year, which probably sufficed to cover her personal expenses at the château of Champrond, would be quite inadequate for that purpose when she was mixing daily in society, often of a very distinguished kind. Susanne Curchod, at the very outset of that visit to the French capital which was to result happily in her marriage with Necker, had to expend more than that sum before she could pass muster in a Parisian drawing-room, and even Rousseau's Thérèse, the ex-kitchen-maid, who was certainly not overwhelmed with social obligations, found it impossible to keep her dress allowance for the year within a similar figure. We do not know for certain whether Julie received a salary for her services at St Joseph. In her abortive attempt at negotiation with Camille d'Albon, Madame du Deffand had spoken vaguely of settling a life annuity of 400 francs yearly upon his sister. This offer is not again, in so many words, referred to, but in July, 1754, or less than three months after the arrival of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse in Paris, we find a contract drawn up by which the Duke of Orleans undertakes to pay her 692 francs annually for the rest of her life. It does not by any means necessarily follow that this was a gift from the Duke's private purse. It was quite usual for men in his position to undertake the payment of life-annuities as a matter of speculation, and the capital may have been supplied by Madame du Deffand, who in that case was generous beyond her first inten-

tions. The bestowal of such annuities was a very common factor in the relations between employers and employed. They were frequently conferred upon servants of long standing, and the ex-tutor or governess in a wealthy house had almost a prescriptive right to receive one when his or her pupils were grown up. And it must certainly be admitted that this last-named custom compares not unfavourably with those current amongst our own present-day aristocracy who, in such cases, are wont to be rather[1] excessively liberal of their recommendations but not generally of recognition in any more substantial form.

Julie's yearly spending money would thus amount to about forty-three pounds, and as a circumstance in her favour we must not omit to notice that she had already won the affection of that important personage Mademoiselle Devreux, who had accompanied her mistress on the visit to Champrond. The friendship of an experienced lady's maid is no despicable advantage where new dresses are to be bought or old ones to be arranged with a view to combining elegance and economy, and we can easily believe that the young girl thus supported deserved even then the reputation attaching to her in her later years of being ever dressed gracefully and becomingly though with simplicity. She was one of those persons who repay careful dressing, for her figure was singularly graceful, and her face, though by her own admission never regularly pretty, might at this early period of her life fairly be called charming. The portrait by Carmon-

[1] The writer knows a case in which a girls' school was started with a list of flourishing references to the aristocratic parents of former pupils. In a few years the school changed hands, but the list of references still continued to be advertised.

telle shows her as she was while still in the bloom of youth and before that dire disease by which one woman in every four was then permanently disfigured had set its mark upon her. We notice that her cheeks are but slightly touched with rouge, and that her black taffetas gown, though it would scarcely satisfy a dress reformer, by no means reduces her figure to the sylph-like proportions which we admire in many ladies of that period, notably in Madame de Genlis, who, however, must be allowed the credit of preaching, if she did not practise, the principles of hygiene. Her dark brown hair, concealed, according to the universal custom, beneath a layer of powder, is arranged in one of those pleasing and unexaggerated *coiffures* obtaining at this time and succeeded about 1770 by the towering erections which made kneeling on the carriage floor compulsory for ladies in full dress. Her eyes are large and dark, and the "tip-tilted" nose imparts a certain shade of piquancy to her thoughtful and intelligent face.

The special charm of her appearance lay, however, as all eye-witnesses agree, in expression—a kind of charm which no picture can at all adequately convey.

"Though not actually beautiful, you are distinguished-looking, and attract attention," wrote the gallant old President Hénault.

"What I shall say of your appearance is only what seems to strike everybody," wrote the cold and reserved d'Alembert, "that your whole bearing is most graceful and distinguished and that you have much mind and expression in all your features, things far preferable to mere soulless beauty."

"That which pre-eminently distinguished her," wrote her faithless lover, Guibert, "was that supreme charm

without which beauty can only attain to mere lifeless perfection, namely expression. Hers had no particular characteristic, it combined them all, so that you could not precisely say that it was either witty, or lively, or sweet, or dignified, or humorous or gracious."

But the admiration attracted by Julie's appearance was slight compared with that bestowed on her manners and conversation. This exquisite circle, in which was comprised the fine flower of Parisian intellect and breeding, could not sufficiently express their astonishment at the ease with which the young rustic, as though to the manner born, at once became one of themselves.

"You have discovered the world's ways by intuition," says Hénault; "it would make no difference if you were transplanted, you would take root anywhere, you would peep through a grating at Madrid, wear your scarf awry in London" (this is rather cruel!) "and tell the grand Turk at Constantinople that your feet were free from dust" (supposed to be an Oriental form of greeting).

D'Alembert, whose early education enabled him better than the President to understand the difficulties surmounted by Julie, is even more emphatic in his testimony on this point.

"The perfection of your manners might not be remarkable in a woman born in Court circles, but in your case it deserves the utmost admiration. You brought it with you from the depths of the provinces, where you had never met anyone who could have imparted it to you. You were as perfect on this point the day after your arrival in Paris as you are to-day [1771]. From the first day you were as natural and as much at ease in the most brilliant and

most exclusive circles, as if you had passed your life amongst them. . . . In short, you intuitively divined the language of what is called *good society*."

The intellectual powers which lay behind this marvellous social charm we shall have abundant opportunities of estimating in the course of this record. Meanwhile we may linger for a moment to glance at the brilliant company who thronged the *salon* at St Joseph, that charming room with the silken hangings of light gold blended with flame colour. Dainty miniature sofas and luxurious easy-chairs were lavishly provided, and all about were scattered tiny tables littered with the latest publications, including even the prohibited pamphlets of Voltaire. The stream of easy and polished talk flowed continuously, now upon art and literature, and now upon the most recent spicy anecdote from Versailles, now upon the canons of Biblical criticism, and now upon the voice and character of a *débutante* at the opera. The unquestioned queen of the assembly and conversation, to whom all bowed in deference, was the little pale, fragile woman, with the biting wit and the ready imperious tongue and the sightless eyes which, such was the acuteness of her other senses, seemed almost to see as in time past. Yet nearly an equal measure of attention, though after a less submissive sort, was bestowed on the graceful, self-possessed girl who moved and spoke as if born to supply what was wanting in the mistress of the house, and to perform all the duties rendered impossible to her by her infirmity. And Madame du Deffand was well pleased that it should be so, for the evil days of jealous tyranny on one side, and smouldering resentment on the other, lay as yet in the far distance, and her attitude towards

this marvellous ugly duckling was marked by all the triumph of a successful discoverer, mingled with a touch of feeling more nearly approaching to the maternal instinct than she ever showed at any other period of her existence; while Julie on her part felt something of that ecstasy of joyful gratitude experienced by her prototype when his bitter pilgrimage had ended in a fair haven, and the swans hailed him as one of their number.

CHAPTER VIII

NEW FRIENDS

AMONG those frequenters of Madame du Deffand's *salon* who were especially distinguished by their admiration for Mademoiselle de Lespinasse the first place, in right alike of age and position, is due to President Hénault. The connection of earlier days entitled him to a kind of brevet rank as master of the house, and he seems to have fulfilled the duties of that station with much ability and helpfulness. It was mainly through his introductions that Madame du Deffand had made good her social footing, and gathered around her her present circle of distinguished friends. In domestic matters he was equally her stand-by. It was to him that she entrusted the important charge of selecting a cook for her establishment at St Joseph, and in this confidence she was well justified, for Hénault was universally admitted to be a past master in the art of supper-giving, and prided himself highly on his skill therein. "How I should like to order you a supper in my very best style, and to think that you would enjoy it," is his effusion of sentiment on hearing that his lady, then absent at Forges, found her appetite improved by taking the waters. But it would appear that afterwards, on one occasion at least, Madame du Deffand, possibly from motives of economy, rashly attempted to engage a cook for herself, and that the result was a lamentable demonstration of the superiority of

masculine rule. "He has better *intentions* than[1] Madame de Brinvilliers," groaned Hénault, on whose digestion the creations of this inferior artist had an unfavourable effect, "but that's all the difference there is between the two!"

The president's affection was shown in a yet more effectual fashion by an annuity of 6000 francs, which during many years he secretly paid to Madame du Deffand. Through his influence at Court another 6000 francs yearly was procured for her from the royal treasury. It is certainly not surprising that Hénault should have been the fetich, or, as Horace Walpole puts it, "the pagod," of the *salon* at St Joseph.

"The president is very near deaf," writes Walpole spitefully, "and much nearer superannuated. He sits by the table: the mistress of the house, who formerly was his, inquires after every dish on the table, is told who has eaten of which, and then bawls the bill of fare of every individual into the president's ears. In short, every mouthful is proclaimed, and so is every blunder I make against grammar. Some that I make on purpose, succeed; and one of them is to be reported to the queen to-day by Hénault, who is her great favourite."

This appalling description, calculated to awaken a sympathetic thrill in all who have had experience of the inexhaustible curiosity proper to the aged deaf, and the painful results which attend it, dates, be it observed, from 1765, eleven years later than Julie's arrival in Paris. At that comparatively early epoch the president was only sixty-nine,[1] and his deafness had not yet assumed the colossal proportions indicated

[1] The notorious poisoner in the reign of Louis XIV.

[2] He was born in 1685.

LE PRÉSIDENT HÉNAULT

FROM A DRAWING IN THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE

by Walpole. He was still an exceedingly charming old man, sustaining with all grace and decorum the tradition of a youth famed for its gallantries. His American-sounding title, conferred on him at the age of twenty-five, has in its actual signification (President of the First Court of Appeal [1]) something which we find difficulty in harmonising with the life and character of its possessor. His gay and brilliant personality has more affinity with that of the "Judge" who courted Maud Müller in the sunny hayfield, and drew smiles from the lawyers by humming an old love-tune in court, than with our insular conception of the judicial office and its bearers. Like other legal luminaries of his day, Hénault contrived to devote an enormous proportion of his time to society, an achievement due, we may assume, not so much to the greater versatility of that generation as to their comparative disregard for professional claims. He was not of noble birth, but his charming manners, combined with certain minute literary pretensions, soon procured him the *entrée* into the most exclusive circles, and won him favour alike at the profligate Court of the Regent and in the sober household of Queen Marie Leczinska.

To do him justice, he made himself not less agreeable in his domestic than in his social relations. An affectionate and attentive, though far from faithful, husband he was blindly adored by a submissive wife —their married life, in fact, going near to realise that masculine ideal of a perfect union which has been so much admired in Fielding's "Amelia"—with this acceptable distinction, that they had plenty of money, and Madame Hénault was not obliged to save six-

[1] "Président de la Première Chambre des Enquêtes."

pences from her own supper while the president was expending guineas in card-playing and other less mentionable pursuits. In the quasi-matrimonial alliance which followed his wife's death Hénault was unfailing in kindness and loyalty to a singularly unloving and unsympathetic woman. Their curious correspondence of 1742, occasioned by the above-mentioned visit to Forges, shows how often she must have irritated even his easy temper, and disappointed his very moderate expectations in the matter of sentiment. Her letters show that preoccupation with her own feelings and that indifference to the feelings of everybody else which were habitual with her, while Hénault, on his part, is full of solicitude for her health and well-being, and takes an amount of trouble most commendable in a busy man to keep her acquainted with every scrap of news by which she might be amused or interested. Something like a quarrel seems at one time imminent.

"Your letters are charming; in fact, you are a most delightful person to live away from," she writes, to which ambiguous compliment he replies with a flash of unmistakable anger. "You never said a truer word, but it is not always wise to tell the whole truth. I believe in my heart that if you could arrange your life as you pleased, the part of absent friend would be the one always allotted to me. . . . Why can't you say at once, 'I feel or rather I see that you have been doing your best for ten years to win my affection, but I promise you, you never will'? . . . As for what you say about the falling-off in your looks, I could reply that that would never make any difference in my feelings. Much you would care whether it did! I laugh at my own presumption in

thinking such a thing. But the real fact is, I am quite certain that the waters will on the contrary, in the long run, much improve your appearance. Otherwise I should not mention the subject, feeling that it would be a liberty in me to do so."

But the president was far too useful a friend to be lightly parted with, and the astute Marquise soon managed to bring him back to his normal attitude of amused and serviceable toleration. His brilliant companion had become to him, in his own words, "a necessary evil," and the bond between them was only severed by death, but he was perfectly conscious that she made no appeal to the deeper feelings of his nature. These were reserved for Madame de Castelmoron, a lady who has no part in this story, and for his own family (he had no children, but was an excellent uncle). Some measure of them, too, he bestowed on the young girl who, for all her tact and self-possession, brought into the *salon* of Madame du Deffand a capacity for enthusiasm, nay, for passion, widely at variance with the character of its mistress. He was exceedingly struck by Julie de Lespinasse, and we may be sure that she always accompanied her patroness to those admirable suppers at his artistically furnished house in the Rue St Honoré. We may be equally sure that in her appreciation of his hospitality she did not fall into the mistake committed by Voltaire,[1] whose complimentary couplet was never forgiven by the president, of undervaluing his *magnum opus*, the famous, "Abrégé Chronologique." If we are to believe contemporary gossip, Hénault's affection

[1] "Hénault, famous for your suppers,
And for your Chronology."
Hénault considered the juxtaposition a slight on his "Chronology."

for Julie went the length of an offer of marriage, but it is more probable that if he ever entertained such a project he had the good sense to relinquish it without a formal declaration. Some passages in his "Portrait" of her—already alluded to—seem, as M. de Ségur acutely observes, to bear out this conjecture. "Your heart is not easily won," he writes. . . . There is something of a challenge about you. A man might well be proud of turning your head, but in most cases he would have his trouble for nothing."

No one certainly was less likely than Julie de Lespinasse to entertain the idea of a mercenary marriage with a man thirty-seven years her senior, and the president's perception of this fact increased his respect for her and did not diminish the half-paternal affection which survived even her rupture with Madame du Deffand.

A less frequent but highly esteemed guest at St Joseph was the Chevalier d'Aydie, whose manners were held by his contemporaries to represent the last word of perfection, and whose letters in effect leave upon the mind an impression of finished and rather melancholy grace. Like Hénault, he had figured at the Court of the Regent and had behind him the memory of a stormy youth, but there the resemblance between the two men ceases. Passion, sin, repentance, expiation, sacrifice, words which, when applied to the genial president, seem absolutely without meaning, are fundamentally implicated in any conception of the Chevalier's character, and this superior capacity for both right and wrong doing lifts him at once to a different moral level. To the modern world he is best known as the lover of Mademoiselle Aïssé, the most pathetic and appealing figure in the long procession

of eighteenth-century women. Born of Circassian parents, she was purchased in the slave-market at Constantinople by M. de Ferriol, then French Ambassador to Turkey, who sent her over to Paris and placed her in charge of his brother's wife, a worthy sister of the notorious Madame de Tencin. Whether his ultimate intentions with regard to the fair child, then three or four years old, were of an entirely blameless nature may well be matter for doubt, but in the end he chose the better part by resolving to consider her only as his adopted daughter. Aïssé (Haidée) received what was then considered a most superior education, and in due time was introduced into society of a distinguished but not over-reputable description. She had grown up beautiful, intelligent, and winning, with a certain lilylike charm which contrasted piquantly with her environment. Like her friend, Madame du Deffand, she had the honour of attracting the Duke of Orleans himself, but with a different result—for, whether from her convent training or from innate rectitude, the girl was virtuously minded, and for once the Regent sighed in vain.

In those social circles in which Aïssé moved the Chevalier d'Aydie was a prominent and popular figure. They fell in love, the love of a lifetime, but the Chevalier was a Knight of Malta, and as such vowed to celibacy. It is true that from vows of this kind there was no great difficulty in obtaining a dispensation, but to procure this he must have resigned the prebends from which, as an almost portionless younger son, he derived the principal part of his income. He had accustomed himself to look upon marriage, except with an heiress, as impossible,

and Aïssé had only an annuity of 4000 francs, bequeathed her by her guardian, M. de Ferriol, who had now passed away. That such a love-story, at such an epoch and in such surroundings, should end in disaster was a foregone conclusion. The points which differentiate this story from a thousand others are these two: that the bitterness of her shame, though hidden from the world, was sufficient to kill the woman, and that the man devoted the rest of his life to making such reparation as was still possible.

In her hour of need Aïssé was loyally and effectually befriended by Bolingbroke's second wife, formerly Marquise de Villette, the cousin of Madame de Maintenon. Under pretence of taking the girl with her on a visit to England, she concealed her in a remote quarter of Paris, and when her child was born found a safe asylum for it in the convent presided over by Madame de Villette, the daughter of Lady Bolingbroke's first marriage. In view of the character borne by Madame de Ferriol herself, and by most of the ladies of her *entourage*, we are half inclined to wonder that such secrecy should have been considered necessary, but the moral code of the day was less lenient in regard to single than to married women, as is demonstrated by that curious rule of Court etiquette which, in the interests of decorum, required that a king's mistress should be doubly, instead of singly, an adulteress. But though thus shielded from the world's censures Aïssé could not recover from the shame of having lived for a time a double life and the anguish of separation from her child whom she could only visit by stealth. Her health gave way, and she faded slowly to the grave. In vain the Chevalier, his better nature aroused by the sight of her suffering, determined

manfully to brave the risks of poverty, and implored her with importunity to become his wife. With a humility almost shocking to our modern feeling, she declared that she was unworthy of such an alliance, and that nothing would induce her so to injure his career. Besides, the renunciation of his benefices would mean that there would be less possibility of saving money for the child, who, though knowing her father not at all, and her mother only as a kind lady who came sometimes to see her, was now the principal object in life to both.

When Aïssé, soothed by the consolations of religion and the remorseful tenderness of her lover, had passed tranquilly away from the world which had never, she said, afforded her a single moment's happiness, the Chevalier d'Aydie seemed to grow into another fashion of man. His youthful follies fell from him, and the remainder of his life appears to have justly merited the character, attributed to him by Voltaire, of a Bayard *sans peur et sans reproche.* He turned his back decisively on the gay metropolis, the scene of his frivolities and dissipations, and went to live in the country, taking with him openly the little girl, who had hitherto lived happily enough under the care of the good-natured nuns. He presented her as his daughter to his family and friends, who, from respect to him, received her on the footing of legitimacy, and devoted himself henceforth to her happiness. By exercising strict self-denial, he was able to marry her, with a respectable dowry, to a neighbour in every way eligible, and she lived a prosperous and honoured life, and has left descendants who still boast of their beautiful ancestress Aïssé.

From motives, doubtless, of economy, the Chevalier,

with the exception of an occasional visit to Paris, spent the rest of his days at the old family château in Périgord. This patriarchal existence, representing the best side of French country life, is thus gaily described by him in a letter to Madame du Deffand:

"I have better employment than reading, madame. I hunt and play games and amuse myself from morning to night with my brothers and our children, and I must frankly say that I have never been more happy nor better pleased with my company."

Yet it is plain that he often regretted the stimulating intellectual atmosphere of the capital.

"When I think of you, madame," he writes, "and of the circle which you have gathered round you, I resent being a hundred leagues from you. For I have neither Cæsar's vanity nor his ambition. I had rather be admitted on suffrance into good company than be the most important person in indifferent. Still, if I cannot say that I am in the first-mentioned position here, I can at least assure you that I am not in the second."

Shortly after the arrival of Julie de Lespinasse at St Joseph, the Chevalier, then more than sixty years old, made her acquaintance, during one of his periodical sojourns in Paris, and was from the first strongly attracted by her. In the respectful tenderness with which he regarded her there mingled perhaps some thought of his own daughter and of the far different lot which had fallen to this much-wronged girl born under conditions very similar.

"Heaven owed you the consolation which you receive from the attentions of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse," he writes to Madame du Deffand after his return into Périgord. ". . . She supplies the

place of your lost sight, and what you value still more madame, she affords you an object for your affections. I am proud of having from the first appreciated her as she deserves, and I beg you not to let her altogether forget me."

Madame du Deffand replies:

"Mademoiselle de Lespinasse is deeply gratified by the charming things you say of her. When you know more of her, you will see how well she deserves them. Every day I am more pleased with her."

Equally generous is her attitude with regard to another old friend, of her own sex this time, who fell with the same rapidity under the charm of her protégée. This was the Maréchale de Luxembourg, best known perhaps for her protection of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. She too, as Duchesse de Boufflers, had had a place in the Chronique Scandaleuse of the Regency, and had chosen the same method of reform as Madame du Deffand, by entering into a semi-matrimonial connection with a person of distinction and repute. In her case, however, this curious kind of alliance was legitimatised, on the death of her first husband, by a real marriage, and as Duchesse de Luxembourg she held a position in society due even more to her talents than to her rank. Her beauty, once remarkable, is said by some of her contemporaries to have declined prematurely; according to others she retained a large share of it till late in life, but all are agreed concerning the singular charm of her manner—so perfect as always to appear unstudied—and the remarkable acuteness of her judgment. On all those questions of good taste and good form which to that generation ranked among the most important matters in life she was gifted with an intuition almost

resembling inspiration, and from her opinion on such points there was no appeal. She was the unquestioned arbiter, not only of elegances, but, what is rather more surprising, of decorums, the unrivalled exponent and upholder of that marvellous code of breeding concerning which Madame de Genlis said that, if it had only rested upon realities, the Age of Gold must have flourished in Paris. The slightest taint of vulgarity was anathema to her, and the offenders, whatever their rank or importance, trembled like schoolchildren in disgrace before the scathing power of her sarcasm. One Sunday, when she and a number of other great ladies assembled at the Prince de Conti's country house were awaiting the arrival of their host before adjourning to the chapel to hear Mass, she whiled away the time by looking over the various books of devotion with which her companions had armed themselves, and gave utterance to some severe criticisms upon the flagrant errors of taste abounding in these pious volumes. One lady timidly ventured upon the stock defence that the Almighty looks not to the language, but to the intention of a prayer. "Don't you ever believe that, madame," answered the Maréchale very seriously. There is something fine about this æsthetic intolerance which reminds us of Matthew Arnold and his contention that the Deity is "disserved and displeased" by such a hymn as the once popular:

"My Jesus to know, and to feel His blood flow."

It was probably the perception of a somewhat similar quality of refined fastidiousness in Julie de Lespinasse which first attracted her to the young girl, and the chivalrous instinct, never wanting in genuinely

well-bred persons, led her to show it even greater honour than she would have done in the case of someone more richly endowed with the gifts of fortune. The Luxembourg family had a charming country villa near the little town of Montmorenci, three leagues from Paris. The whole neighbourhood, says Grimm, was a kind of garden famous for its fruits, especially its cherries; the château and its surrounding park are described in glowing terms by Rousseau, to whom the Duke had assigned a small pavilion in the grounds, to occupy when the fancy took him. An invitation to Montmorenci was esteemed a high honour, much sought after in the fashionable world and conceded to few, but Julie was from the first asked to accompany Madame du Deffand in her visits to the château, and treated as a guest whom the heads of the house delighted to honour. It was here that, at a somewhat later date, she made the acquaintance of Jean-Jacques, whose democratic misanthropy was not proof against the perfect breeding and the genuine kindness of the Maréchale and her husband. Like Carlyle, he much preferred the "effete" aristocracy to the middle classes, and perhaps, if the truth were told, even to the virtuous peasants who loom so large in his writings.

No sketch of Madame du Deffand's circle can be esteemed complete without some mention of Pont de Veyle, one of her oldest and most constant friends. He was the son of that Madame de Ferriol to whose charge Aïssé had been confided by her brother-in-law, and seems to have always entertained a brotherly feeling for the fair and ill-fated Circassian. That his lifelong intimacy with Madame du Deffand, which towards the end was slightly endangered by his developing an irritating habit of coughing, had nothing of

a romantic nature about it may be gathered from the fireside scene dramatically described by Grimm. "Pont de Veyle?" "Madame?" "Where are you?" "At the corner of the fire." "Are you lounging comfortably with your feet on the fender, as one should do in a friend's house?" "Yes, madame." "There's no doubt that there are few friendships of as long standing as ours." "That's quite true." "Fifty years, isn't it?" "Yes, more than fifty years." "And not the slightest misunderstanding in all that time?" "No, I have always been surprised at that myself." "But, Pont de Veyle, isn't that just because, in our hearts, we have never cared a straw for each other?" "That's quite possible, madame."

But if not remarkable for warmth of feeling, Pont de Veyle had a liberal share of the social talents which almost above everything else contributed to make a man's reputation. Walpole, indeed, who seldom says a good word for any member of his own sex, states that Pondevelle (so he elects to spell the name) "can be very agreeable but seldom is. . . . He has not the least idea of cheerfulness in conversation, seldom speaks but on grave subjects, and not often on them. . . . . His air and look are cold and forbidding." But even Walpole grudgingly admits his "very amusing talent" for writing and singing comic verses. They were sometimes extremely indecent, but he "is so old and sings so well that it is permitted in all companies." The severe Madame de Genlis also notices his ready gift of improvisation, which reminds us of Theodore Hook. When he was staying at the Prince de Conti's house, where she was also a guest, a regular part of every evening's entertainment was a set of impromptu verses from him describing all the

ladies of the company, very cleverly done, and sung with great spirit. It is to be observed that she by no means confirms the strictures of Walpole upon Pont de Veyle's "forbidding" manners, but on the contrary considers him a charming old man.

In our enumeration of the personal friends of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, amongst whom Pont de Veyle, though mentioned in her letters, does not appear to have been reckoned, we must not forget the Marquis d'Ussé. Her acquaintance with him dates indeed from an earlier period of her existence, for being a relation of the de Vichys he had met her at the château of Champrond, and we learn from a letter of Madame du Deffand that he and his family were strongly interested on hearing of Julie's prospective arrival in Paris. He was an eccentric old man, much given to absence of mind, but universally esteemed for his sterling qualities. "Everybody loves him," wrote Hénault, "if only because it is the fashion to do so. But only those who are good themselves can appreciate him as he really deserves." His affection for Julie de Lespinasse was strong and constant, and found a final quaint expression in his legacy to her of his "Moréri's Historical Dictionary."

Another faithful friend, who was nearer her own age and survived her by many years, was the Comte d'Anlèzy, a relation of the d'Albon family. He is known chiefly for the courage which enabled him to make his life a success despite the terrible handicap of personal deformity. The kind and feeling terms in which Madame du Deffand alludes to this affliction are well known, and throw a world of light upon her character. "That nasty humpback is in the greatest grief," she writes to Walpole two days after the death

of Julie de Lespinasse. The woman whom she had once hailed as the "happiness and consolation" of her life had long since incurred her hatred, and no terms of abuse were now too coarse or too cruel for this dead enemy and for those who had continued to love her.

But the one member of Madame du Deffand's circle who was destined to exercise most influence upon the fortunes of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse has as yet been mentioned only in passing allusion. D'Alembert, for the reader will have conjectured that it is he who is meant, deserves to have a larger space allotted to him than any of the foregoing, and will be fully dealt with in the chapter immediately ensuing.

CHAPTER IX

THE FOUNDLING OF SAINT JEAN LE ROND

BETWEEN Jean d'Alembert and the other friends of Madame du Deffand, who have been described in the preceding chapter, there lies the gulf of a far-reaching and most significant distinction—a distinction only to be comprehended by realising that they belonged to the old order of things, while he was emphatically of the new. The Duc and Duchesse de Luxembourg, the Chevalier d'Aydie, the Marquis d'Ussé, the Comte d'Anlézy and the Marquise du Deffand herself were all the descendants of noble families, and members of the privileged class who, in theory, were supposed to derive a sufficient income from their territorial estates, and in practice did somehow generally contrive to get a living without working for it. All professions, except that of arms, were considered beneath their dignity, and it is only right to admit that from that profession, which in those days usually involved active service, there were few indeed who recoiled. All the men in the group just enumerated, without excepting even the poor deformed Comte d'Anlézy, had been soldiers at some period of their lives, and in the chronicles of the times we rarely encounter a nobleman of whom the same may not be said.

Hénault, on the other hand, whose grandfather was a prosperous bookseller and his father a farmer-general, belongs to a rather different category, but one equally

characteristic of the Ancien Régime, in that he was born to easy circumstances and an inheritance of patronage which made his success in the legal profession almost a foregone conclusion. It is true that he had plenty of brains and was reputed to work hard, but it is scarcely likely that a modern judge or barrister would be much impressed by the severity of his labours. Pont de Veyle, though created a count, was born into the same legal caste, which had a recognised status of its own, below that of the nobility but superior to the *bourgeoisie* proper. His father was a lawyer, and in a half-hearted fashion he, for a time, followed the same profession, but threw it up, and, having abundant interest at Court, obtained first the sinecure of Reader to the King, and then a more important but scarcely more onerous position, corresponding in some rough fashion to that of First Lord of the Admiralty.

D'Alembert was very far, as we shall see, from possessing any of the advantages of birth, and his life is one long record of poverty and strenuous labour. In this, as in other respects, he was a typical representative of that rising party just beginning to make its power felt and destined in the end to undermine the old order of things in France, the party of the Encyclopedia. Like him, its leaders were nearly always men of obscure origin and scanty means. Thus Diderot was the son of a cutler, Morellet of a stationer, Marmontel of a small *métayer*. In another matter of even greater moment the difference between the two classes is not less sharply defined. The older generation, though more often than not irreligious, were seldom professed unbelievers—in fact, so far as theory went, they were not perhaps generally

unbelievers at all. Madame de Luxembourg was, if we may believe Walpole's good-natured description, a dutiful daughter of her Church, so far at least as fear of the devil confers a claim to that title. Madame du Deffand, towards the end of her life, made more than one effort to *se faire dévote*, or, in English idiom, to "get religion"; but the process bored her as much as did the abortive attempt of earlier days to be reconciled with her husband, and she gave it up in despair. She never professed unbelief, however (according to Madame de Genlis she had never taken the trouble to think out the question), and, as has been already said, attended High Mass at her parish church (St Sulpice), and had besides a reserved seat in the convent chapel of St Joseph. Hénault, when too infirm to leave the house, had Mass said regularly in a private oratory, and could never bring himself to approve of Voltaire's attacks upon revealed religion. The Chevalier d'Aydie might, after his reformation fairly pass as a not unworthy specimen of the Christian gentleman.

D'Alembert, though a man of high principle and exemplary life (attributes which can by no means be claimed for the Encyclopedists generally), was in his views fundamentally and avowedly anti-Catholic, and, it must be confessed, anti-Christian. There can be little doubt that it was through his influence that Julie de Lespinasse became in after life identified with the Encyclopedic party. Between the man of thirty-six and the girl of twenty-one there was, from the first, a strong attraction of mutual sympathy, arising perhaps in some degree from the remarkable similarity of their fortunes.

"All seemed made to unite us," says d'Alembert,

in that tragical outpouring of a broken heart in which his anguish found expression after her death. "Both without father or mother, brother or sister, familiar from the first moment of our lives with heartless desertion, misery and injustice, Nature seemed to have sent us into the world that we might be all in all to each other."

In his case, however, the rôles of the respective parents were reversed, for his father proved himself to be by no means deficient in natural feeling, while his mother, Madame de Tencin, surpassed even Gaspard de Vichy in heartlessness and callous cruelty. One service only—and that a most involuntary one—she ever did her son, since it must have been from her that he inherited those commanding intellectual powers which by her were employed for purposes widely different from those of science and literature. The daughter of a provincial lawyer, she began her career as a nun, notorious for her beauty, intelligence, and infamous life. The sisterhood in which her lot had been cast was of an easy-going type, by no means unusual in those days, and had successfully defied all the attempts of their diocesan to enforce a somewhat stricter discipline. Yet even this indulgent community had not reckoned on the honour of harbouring a recognised demi-mondaine, and it was with the mutual contentment and connivance of all concerned that she quitted this asylum for the larger life of Paris. Once there Madame de Tencin (who owed this brevet title either to her status in "religion," or to the rank of Marquise conferred on her in later life) made such good use of her talents for intrigue, both political and amatory, that she was never obliged to return to the cloister, and ultimately obtained a dispensation from

MADAME DE TENCIN

FROM AN ENGRAVING IN THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE

the Pope, who compromised matters by creating her a canoness of some place unknown, to which, says Saint-Simon, she never went. As mistress of the infamous Abbé Dubois she obtained an influence in public affairs which she improved to such purpose as at last to realise her ambition of becoming, through the medium of her brother and instrument (Cardinal de Tencin, already mentioned in these pages), practically a Minister of the Crown.

To such far-reaching activity the duties of maternity, apart from the indecorum attaching to them in the circumstances, would certainly have offered an inconvenient interruption. Madame de Tencin accordingly when, in November 1717, she became a mother, cut the Gordian knot by the simple expedient of ordering her child to be exposed on the steps of the Church of Saint Jean le Rond.[1] The poor baby was rescued by the police and received into the cold bosom of public charity, a foster-mother at five francs a month being found for him in the country. From the condition in which, at the end of six weeks, he was discovered, it is not likely that his nurse would long have continued to enjoy her salary, but deliverance was at hand. His father, the Chevalier Destouches, a man of dissolute life but not of inhuman nature, had meanwhile returned from a foreign mission to Paris, and set himself at once to seek for the child. The abominable mother refused at first to give him any indication concerning its fate, but Destouches was resolute and happily not too late. He found the poor little mite in such a state as was to be expected of a child whose first bed had been on the cold stones (and that on a winter night), and who had since for six weeks enjoyed the benefits

[1] Near Notre Dame. It has been long pulled down.

of public nursing at four shillings a month. His head, we are told, was "no bigger than an apple," his fingers "the size of needles." For hours his father drove about Paris holding in his arms the infant, whom he had wrapped in his own cloak, and endeavouring to find some human-hearted woman who, for such a modest sum as he could afford to pay, would undertake the duties of nurse. Nobody at first seemed willing to accept the responsibility of a nursling apparently doomed to death, but at last a glazier's wife, a kind soul if ever there was one, was moved to motherly pity at the sight of the suffering innocent, and by unremitting care actually nursed him into something approaching health.

In her charge he was left till old enough to be sent to school. His father visited him frequently, his detestable mother only once. The little Jean, who was then seven years old, always remembered what took place at that single interview. Destouches, whose importunities had prevailed upon Madame de Tencin on this one occasion to accompany him, remarked to her in a tone of reproach: "You must allow, madame, that it would have been a pity if this dear little fellow had been left to perish." "Oh, if you are going to begin scolding, I'm off," flippantly replied Madame de Tencin, rising as if to depart. That craving for poetic justice which is inherent in the human breast gave rise to a tradition that in after years Madame de Tencin, realising that she was the mother of a distinguished man, repented of her determination to disown him, and that her overtures to him were sternly and coldly rejected. But d'Alembert himself declared that there was not a word of truth in this dramatic legend. She never

made any advances to him, he said, and if she had he would have accepted them; he would have been glad to have a mother at any price. In like manner the world on her death found it hard to believe that she had bequeathed her whole fortune to a stranger, and invented a story that it had in part, at least, been left in trust for her son. But that son knew better. "She never had a thought for me in her lifetime," he said, "why should she have a thought for me in her death?"

The case is almost aggravated by the curious circumstance that this unnatural mother was, apparently, a most good-natured woman, and in effect by no means incapable of doing a kind action. Marmontel, who, at the beginning of his career, benefited by her patronage (for she liked clever men, and was a pioneer in the fashion of literary *salons*), has with much humour recorded the impression of sincerity and kind-hearted simplicity which she made upon his inexperienced mind. No one who has read her letters to the Duc de Richelieu, written when she was at the height of her political power, can fail to be struck by her perpetual assumption of an affectionate interest in the little de Fronsac, her correspondent's son, and the minute details into which she enters concerning his manners, habits, acquirements and all such matters as are naturally dear to a father's heart. Taken in conjunction with her callous abandonment of her own child, this affectation of a quality, in itself so pleasing and womanly, inspires an almost greater repulsion than any other part of her character.

We return to the fortunes of little Jean Baptiste Lerond (so baptised, I need scarcely explain, from

the locality in which he was discovered). His father, who died when the boy was nine years old, bequeathed him an annuity of 1200 francs, and a recommendation to the care of the Destouches family, with which they honourably complied. By their influence Jean was at the age of twelve removed from his modest school in the Faubourg St Antoine to the famous Collège des Quatre Nations, now represented, so far as it still exists, by the Bibliothèque Mazarin and the Institut de France. This institution had been founded by Cardinal Mazarin for the gratuitous instruction of boys belonging to the higher classes, the greater number of scholars being noblemen's sons, and, according to the standard of the times, their requirements, mental and physical, were liberally provided for. From the modern point of view, it might conceivably seem a den of hardship and cruelty, and in this place we may note that the French schoolboy of that day, unlike his successor, participated to the full with his British compeer in the privilege of receiving corporal punishment.[1] For a boy so clever and hard-working as Jean, however, even this system would have few terrors, and he speedily achieved distinction in all his classes, and at the hours of recreation doubtless[2] played happily enough at *barres* in the

[1] Mercier, in his "Tableau de Paris," gives a lurid picture of the cruelty with which flogging was practised at this very "Collège des Quatre Nations." He tells a scarcely credible story of a porter stabbed to death in a scuffle by one of the bigger boys who refused to submit to his punishment.

[2] Mazarin had intended the Collège course to comprise instruction in riding, fencing and dancing, but this excellent provision was found to be too expensive, and d'Alembert never had the benefit of these gentlemanly accomplishments. During one of his visits to Prussia he writes to Julie, in giving an account of a Court ball: "You may be sure I did not dance, but if I had wished, I might have danced with princesses."

big flagged courtyard which remains to this day. At eighteen he took his Bachelor of Arts degree (for school and university courses were then dovetailed into each other in a manner rather difficult of comprehension to moderns) read law for two years, dabbled in medicine, and, finally, having discovered that his true bent was mathematical, settled down, at the age of twenty, to the study of the exact sciences.

He was now once more living under the roof of his kind nurse, Madame Rousseau, for whom he always entertained a devoted attachment, sufficient in itself to refute the charges of coldness and ingratitude sometimes brought against him. His annuity of fifty pounds brought affluence to the humble household, and he himself, by sharing their frugal meals, and otherwise exercising the utmost economy, was able to devote his whole attention to mathematics, and to dispense with the taking of pupils, which he regarded (and in his own case doubtless with justice) as an indefensible waste of time. By degrees the publication of various scientific works brought him reputation, though no great increase of income, and about a year or two before his first meeting with Julie de Lespinasse he had become known to the general public through his connection with the Encyclopedia. Of this remarkable production, destined under its inoffensively sounding name to furnish the battleground for internecine party strife, more will hereafter be said. For the present it is sufficient to observe that Diderot, having been commissioned by the booksellers (as publishers were then frankly denominated) to undertake the editorship of this vast publication, invited d'Alembert, for by

that name[1] of doubtful origin he had elected to call himself, to be his coadjutor. The Introduction or Preliminary Discourse was written by him, and appeared at the end of 1752 along with several essays on general subjects. This first excursion into non-scientific regions established his reputation as a man of literature, and also as a formidable controversialist, and procured him the undying hatred of the clerical party owing to the aggressively unorthodox bias which he took no great pains to conceal. Some satirical remarks, moreover, on the relations of literary men with their patrons, gave umbrage to divers exalted persons who had begun to interest themselves in the rising genius, and even the good-natured President Hénault took mortal offence because his cherished "Abrégé Chronologique" was not selected for special mention in the Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia as one of the great historical works of the day. It is impossible not to admire the independence shown by d'Alembert in this matter, for he had to resist the solicitations not only of interest but of friendship. Madame du Deffand, at this time his chosen confidante and sympathiser, was most anxious that he should be on good terms with Hénault, but he was adamant to her entreaties.

"Can you really think, madame," he writes, "that I ought to mention the 'Abrégé Chronologique' in a work destined to celebrate the great geniuses of the nation and the works which have really contributed to the progress of letters and science? I grant you, it is a useful work, and handy enough, but that is all

[1] M. Joseph Bertrand hazards the conjecture that this name may form an anagram of his earlier appellation, thus: Baptiste Lerond = d'Alembert, soit l

there is to it. That is what literary people think, and that is what the world will say when the president is no more, and when I myself am no more. I do not wish to incur the reproach of having given exaggerated praise to anyone."

Matters were not conspicuously mended by the article on Chronology in the Encyclopedia itself, which was also entrusted to d'Alembert, and in which the president's *magnum opus* was briefly mentioned as one of several good chronological abridgements. Yet, to the credit of the Ancien Régime be it said, neither his uncompromising independence nor his extreme poverty prevented d'Alembert from achieving a considerable social success in some of the most aristocratic of Parisian circles. His popularity was in the first instance owing to a remarkable gift of mimicry, but as his intellectual powers gradually became known they met with due recognition from a society which, however grave its deficiencies, was most generous in appreciating every form of talent. Among the persons of distinction who were first in welcoming him to their houses may be mentioned Madame Geoffrin, the Duchesse du Maine, the President Hénault, and last, but not least, Madame du Deffand herself.

This lady had from the first a strong liking for d'Alembert, which was in no way diminished by his rather ferocious spirit of independence. It was one of her most cherished illusions that she enjoyed plain speaking; and so, no doubt, she did under the form which it assumes in d'Alembert's letters to her written during the early days of her friendship. Few things are so intoxicating to a clever woman as the homage paid to her intellect by a man of genius whose profes-

sions and practice alike convince her that only to intellect would such homage be conceded. To be consulted concerning the literary projects of this brilliant Ishmael, to be made the confidante of his depreciatory judgments upon other writers (she had not sufficient loyalty really to resent his snubbing of Hénault), all this was delightful flattery indeed, the more so because, at the time, it was undoubtedly sincere. Their opinions of each other were, as will hereafter appear, destined to undergo considerable modification, but in the mean while d'Alembert was one of the most assiduous frequenters of Madame du Deffand's *salon*, and we shall presently see that her friendship, even against his will, was of effectual service to him.

At the period which we have now reached, d'Alembert was, as has already been said, between thirty-six and thirty-seven years of age. He was not commonly supposed to be remarkable for physical attractions. The memoirs of the time are full of allusions to his small, meagre figure, insignificant face, and shrill, falsetto voice. Yet the portrait by Latour taken about this date,[1] with its charming reproduction of that satirical but not unkindly expression generally, on his own showing, attributed to him, scarcely bears out these disparaging commentaries. A man of blameless life, he did not, of course, escape the stream of vile innuendo with which so rare a phenomenon was in those days invariably greeted. It is one of the finest points in his character that he never yielded to the temptation, particularly alluring to a Frenchman, of meeting these insults with boastful tales of imaginary conquests. He was content to speak of his life as it really was and as it lay open to the eyes of all the

[1] In 1753.

D'ALEMBERT

FROM THE PASTEL BY LATOUR IN THE MUSÉE DE SAINT QUENTIN

world. Work, especially scientific work, was to him the main object of existence, and so far he had found no other which could for a moment be placed in competition with it.

"If you only knew the sweetness and restfulness of geometry!" he writes to Madame du Deffand, who had urged him to devote his time to more popular subjects, "and then the dunces never read you, and so can neither praise nor blame you! . . . Ah! if you knew all the fine things I am writing now which no one will ever read. . . . Geometry is my wife, and I would fain be a true husband."

Yet even he, indefatigable worker as he was, was so far of his century that he seems to have always kept his evenings free for recreation. Play and opera and supper-party had all a liberal share in the disposition of his time, and his worst enemies never denied that he could be excellent company. After the severe labour of the morning, his spirits seemed to rise like those of a boy out of school, and his constant flow of satirical humour, pointed by occasional samples of most artistic mimicry, often kept his companions laughing for hours together.

Such was d'Alembert when he first made the acquaintance of one destined to enlarge his views of life, by introducing him to hitherto undreamt-of possibilities, alike of happiness and of suffering.

CHAPTER X

PHILOSOPHY AND MUSIC

MADAME DU DEFFAND'S quarters at St Joseph were, as d'Alembert elegantly expressed it, "a devil of a way" from his modest lodging over the glazier's shop in the Rue Michel le Comte, that narrow, quaint old street where a visitor can still fancy himself back in the Paris of the eighteenth century. Her former abode had been much nearer him, yet, despite this increased distance, his letters to her during that absence in the country so often alluded to contain many promises of continuing to visit her frequently on her return. One condition, however, he is inclined to make—namely, that he shall see her only *tête-à-tête.* Either he will dine with her (Madame du Deffand was at this time forming resolutions, which she never carried out, of going to bed earlier, and coming down in time for the midday dinner) or he will arrive at the beginning of the evening and vanish before her other guests appear. The truth is that he was then out of conceit with the world in general, and with the childlike naïvetè which is such an endearing characteristic of his sex, and which seems to be most strongly developed in its ablest members, he pours out his grievances to this sympathising correspondent, accompanied by assurances that they do not affect him in the least. He is not making any money, and the Academy won't elect him, and people are saying horrible things about his writings, and the President

Hénault is, on chronological grounds, mortally offended with him, and—"*I* don't care!" He never accepts invitations now (going regularly to the Opera, however), is in bed every night by nine, and no life ever suited him so well, and he means to keep to it, etc. etc. etc.

D'Alembert, it may be observed, was always rather in the habit of representing himself as a recluse, a very frequent pose with the people of that day, and apparently compatible with what to the degenerate twentieth century appears a considerable amount of dissipation. In the present instance, however, his professions seem to have been for a time quite genuine, but the mood which dictated them passed away. Not long after Madame du Deffand's return to Paris we find him established as a regular member, perhaps next to Hénault the most important member, of her evening circle, and when she went out to supper it seems to have been almost as much a matter of course for him to be included in the invitation as for Julie de Lespinasse herself.

The mention of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse suggests the probable clue to d'Alembert's change of attitude. We have seen how deep was the impression which the young girl from the first made upon him, Intellect was the god of his idolatry, but perhaps even Julie's intellectual powers commanded less of his admiration than did the perfect bearing which, as he told her, she had apparently acquired by instinct. Under all his assumption of independence there lay a rather painful consciousness of his own deficiencies in the article of breeding—deficiencies which, according to Madame du Deffand, were unfavourably commented upon on his first appearance in society. It is easy to understand that the glazier's household would be scarcely

the place to learn manners, and, though most of his fellow pupils at the Collège des Quatre Nations were of good family, the school life of the time was too rough and hard to have a particularly refining influence. Between Julie and him a humorous understanding seems to have grown up that she was in these matters to be his mentor. Thus in one of his letters to her, during his visit to the King of Prussia, he banteringly tells her that she must not expect to find his table manners improved by keeping royal society, as Frederic himself sets him a very bad example. While Julie lectured him on deportment, he in turn lectured her on the moral obligation of cheerfulness and the duty of eschewing the minor social fictions, neither of which lessons came easily to a temperament distinguished by frequent variations of mood and a sensitive anxiety to please. Their friendship early noticed by at least one sympathetic observer,[1] grew on the man's side all the sooner into love, that as yet his only affair of the heart had been a very innocent and rather silly flirtation with one of his nurse's daughters, strongly disapproved by Madame du Deffand, who perhaps feared that in a man of his honourable character the result might be a permanent entanglement.

In English novels, and to a great extent in English life, an offer of marriage is regarded as the natural outcome of falling in love, and even the more prudent countrymen of d'Alembert expressed some surprise as year after year went by leaving him still an obviously devoted lover, and yet to all appearance not a matrimonial suitor. At the present stage of affairs, however, he might certainly plead with truth, as he

[1] Marmontel.

pleaded less convincingly twelve years later, that he was too poor to keep a wife. Shortly before, when declining a lucrative post offered him at Berlin by the great Frederic, he had written: "My fortune is less than moderate, my whole income only amounts to 1700 francs a year" (rather over 70 pounds). Of this sum 1200 francs, or about 50 pounds, were bequeathed him, it will be remembered, by his father, the remainder was derived from the Academy of Sciences, of which he was a member. For his services as joint editor, he was also receiving from the publishers of the Encyclopedia another 1200 francs a year, besides some additional bonuses, but this was not a resource to be reckoned upon, as the Encyclopedia might, at any moment, be stopped by Government. As for his other literary work, he had expected (so he told Madame du Deffand) that the "Miscellaneous Essays" might bring him in as much as two or three hundred pounds, but it looked as if twenty would be much nearer the mark. It is true that Frederic, though disappointed in his design of securing this scientific genius for his own service, had magnanimously bestowed upon him another fifty pounds annually by way of pension. But even a fixed income of 120 pounds (not a penny of which was derived from capital), plus some uncertain additions amounting, at the very outside, to another 100 pounds, was scarcely sufficient to commence housekeeping upon in Paris, where the President Hénault, in his young days, with an allowance of 250 pounds from his parents, for pocket money only, had thought himself exceedingly ill-treated.

I have gone at some length into this question of income, not merely to account for d'Alembert's

backwardness as a suitor, but because a recent French writer has seen good to dispute his reputation for disinterestedness and honourable poverty, and, in particular, reproaches him with accepting the above-mentioned pension from Frederic. But such international gratuities were then the recognised method for encouraging scientific and literary activity, and no discredit was attached by public opinion to receiving them. The reproach is in the present instance rendered especially unjust by the fact that d'Alembert, though his unorthodoxy in religion and, still more, in music (!), had just forfeited his chance of a pension from the Home Government, and Frederic's benefaction was, by this free-thinking monarch, largely designed as a solatium.

There is yet another aspect of this question which well deserves consideration. Is there not, after all, something to be said for a society in which a man so poor as d'Alembert was received on equal terms with Hénault, and others much richer even than he? Arthur Young's remarks upon this excellent characteristic of the Parisian *beau monde* are well worth recalling here.

"The society for a man of letters, or who has any scientific pursuit, cannot be exceeded. . . . I should pity the man who expected, without other advantages of a very different nature, to be well received in a brilliant circle at London, because he was a fellow of the Royal Society. But this would not be the case with a member of the Academy of Sciences at Paris: he is sure of a good reception everywhere."

Yet this shrewd observer does not fail to record some other considerations inclining the balance against Paris as an abode for people of small means.

"Walking, which in London is so pleasant and so clean that ladies do it every day, is here a toil and fatigue to a man, and an impossibility to a well-dressed woman. . . . I saw a poor child run over and probably killed, and have been myself many times blackened with the mud of the kennels. . . . If young noblemen at London were to drive their chaises in streets without footways as their brethren do at Paris, they would speedily and justly get very well threshed or rolled in the kennel. This circumstance renders Paris an ineligible residence for persons that cannot afford to keep a coach; a convenience which is as dear as at London. The *fiacres*, hackney-coaches, are much worse than at that city; and chairs there are none, for they would be driven down in the streets. To this circumstance, also, it is owing that all persons of small or moderate fortune are forced to dress in black, with black stockings.[1]

In justice to the Ancien Régime we must add his concluding reflection:

"With the pride, arrogance, and ill-temper of English wealth this could not be borne, but the prevailing good-humour of the French eases all such untoward circumstances."

Young's statements concerning the danger and discomfort of walking in Paris are confirmed, with the addition of many lurid details, by French contemporary writers such as Mercier and Restif de la

[1] This does not seem to our ideas a very terrible privation, but we must remember that men had not yet decided on immolating the picturesque in dress to the convenient, and that women never thought about the convenient at all. In the opinion of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse the ideal gala suit for a gentleman included a brown coat embroidered in silver, with lining and vest of pale yellow—a scheme of colour which may well stir some of us to unavailing regrets.

Bretonne. Not only were there no sidepaths, but there was apparently no surface drainage worth taking into account. In rainy weather the filthy gutters, little better than open sewers, which flowed down the middle of the streets were swollen to an extent which made them exceedingly difficult to cross. This was the opportunity of the enterprising class known as *décrotteurs*, who kept a plank bridge mounted on rollers in readiness at the top of each street, and for the consideration of about half-a-farthing allowed foot-passengers to traverse it. These bridges had of course to be withdrawn in a hurry every time a carriage came that way, and the results to those who happened to be crossing on them were, as may be supposed, far from delectable. When we further consider that the street lamps were never lighted on nights when the moon according to the calendar should have been in evidence, and according to facts was frequently invisible, we begin to understand why d'Alembert laid so much stress upon the distance intervening between the Rue Michel le Comte and the Rue St Dominique.

In Mercier's "Tableau de Paris" we have a tragic picture of a needy gentleman going out to dinner or supper at a smart house, and dressed for the occasion in a black velvet coat, adorned with gold lace, a gold-embroidered vest, an elaborate wig and (in flat contradiction to Young) white silk stockings. His only chance of arriving in presentable trim is to requisition the services of the *décrotteurs* who, besides providing the bridges above referred to, fulfilled the additional mission (from which their name was derived), of brushing and polishing foot-passengers into something approaching respectability. The alternative was of

course to take a *fiacre*, for which the average fare seems to have been about the same as it is in London now—namely, a shilling (24 sous). There was a traditional belief that for short distances the legal price only amounted to sixpence, but this view was resisted by the cabmen with all that stubborn tenacity and bewildering eloquence which, in every country and period, have distinguished this courageous class of men. Almost the only amusing scene in Marivaux's dreary novel "Marianne" represents a pitched battle on this very point between Marianne's mistress (a linendraper) and a dissatisfied cabman, to whom the terrified heroine secretly slips an extra fourpence, thus getting rid of him, to her own relief and the intense disgust of her more spirited employer.

Shilling cab-fares become a serious consideration where the whole income, as in d'Alembert's case, is under 200 pounds. As a set-off we may reckon a considerable supply of good dinners and suppers, for in the eighteenth century Parisian hospitality was not the ethereal affair that it is in the twentieth. But, unluckily, d'Alembert, like most brain-workers, suffered too much from his digestion to appreciate these advantages at their proper value. He had the true dyspeptic's craving for simple fare and the true dyspeptic's intolerance towards all who were fortunate enough to be able to enjoy their food. He is half inclined to trace Madame du Deffand's blindness to her love of good living. When enjoying the royal hospitality at Sans Souci he lectures the great King on indulging too freely in fruit. He writes pathetically to Julie that the highly spiced made dishes of the Prussian Court dinners will be the ruin of him. He wants plain broth and plain boiled beef, and cannot get them.

Besides, he suffers from the want of his daily walks in Paris. After all, it seems there was a good side to those toilsome pilgrimages from the Rue Michel le Comte to the convent of St Joseph.

Theatre-going, his favourite recreation, would cost d'Alembert nothing at all. At the Comédie Française the price of admission to the pit or *parterre*, where, till the year 1782, no seats were provided, was nominally one franc.[1] But the actors had the right of giving away, beforehand, a large proportion, sometimes as much as five-sixths, of the total of the tickets, and the friends on whom they were bestowed were often able to retail them for three or even six times their original value. All men of any literary distinction, however, were, on the intercession of some influential friend, granted the privilege of free entry. In d'Alembert's case his *entrées*, were allowed him at the request of the celebrated actress Mademoiselle Clairon, who had read his "Miscellaneous Essays" with admiration, and was always thought to be more or less in sympathy with the Encyclopedic party generally. Admission to the Opera had been already procured for him through the influence of President Hénault, and we have seen how constantly he availed himself of this privilege. Amidst his truly encyclopedic studies he had found time to devote a good deal of attention to music, and it was his heterodoxy on this subject, even more than on theology or science, which brought him into disrepute with the followers of established tradition.

The Encyclopedic, or, as its adherents styled it, the "philosophic," movement was beginning to make itself felt in all directions. In history, science, art, literature, ethics, might be traced the growth of a new

[1] At the Opera, according to Rousseau, it was two francs.

spirit, which, in its various manifestations, seemed to divide the public into two camps, and was greeted on one side with fervent enthusiasm, on the other with the fiercest opposition. In more modern times it might be both possible and instructive to discover a chain of connection which should unite into one concrete whole "The Origin of Species," the pictures of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the Operas of Wagner, the political economy of Ruskin, the novels of Thomas Hardy and the plays of Mr Bernard Shaw. But in the days of the Encyclopedia the revolt against convention invaded the different provinces of intellectual activity almost simultaneously, and the lines on which it proceeded were far more narrowly traced than in the nineteenth century, and hence tended, at least in appearance, to a much greater unity of purpose. It may seem far-fetched to enumerate the controversy concerning French *versus* Italian music as one of the effects of the Encyclopedic movement, but it was evidently so regarded by contemporaries, and the most active partisans on the side of musical innovations—Grimm, Diderot, Rousseau, and d'Alembert himself—were among the recognised leaders of the philosophical party.

The quarrel arose after this fashion. In the autumn of 1752 an Italian company visited Paris, and were allowed to perform at the Opera House, which at that time adjoined the Palais Royal. They gave several pieces by Pergolesi and other Italian composers which were hailed by a large proportion of the audience as a welcome variation from the so-called French music of Lulli, Rameau, and their followers. In the conservative section of the public, on the other hand, they excited a disapprobation quite as intelligent

as that which Wagner within our own memories aroused in the British concert goer, and a great deal more violent. D'Alembert in one of his letters to Madame du Deffand describes the opening of the fray in terms which leave no doubt as to his own opinion concerning its merits.

"We have been having some excellent Italian music these last three months. This music is really a new language to us French people, and far superior to ours in truthfulness, liveliness, and expression. I believe we are going to have a schism about it in the Opera, as bad as the one we have in the Church."

A few days later:

"People say I am at the head of the Italian faction, but I am not exclusive, and always ready to admire French music when it is good. All the same I believe that we are a thousand miles behind the Italians in this matter."

For over a year the battle raged hotly. Not only did it supplant all other topics of conversation, but it gave rise to an enormous number of pamphlets, of which only two (both on the Italian side), are now remembered—"The Little Prophet of Bœhmischbroda," by Grimm, and Rousseau's "Letter upon French Music." "The Little Prophet" was a humorous production much admired by Voltaire, but Rousseau's contribution to the discussion was marked by his usual vituperative earnestness. He pours forth the vials of his wrath upon French composers, French music, French musicians, and the French language after a fashion which inclines us to consider the subsequent withdrawal of his right of free admission to

the Opera a pardonable retort on the part of the authorities. He himself and his friends firmly believed that he went in danger of death, or at the very least of banishment, and it is certain that party feeling ran very high, and that the devotees of French music, strong in the support of Madame de Pompadour, who had espoused their side, were anxious to enlist the authority of the Throne itself against their opponents. In order to realise the situation we must remember that the Opera, like the Comédie Française, was in direct dependence upon the King, the actors at both establishments being, theoretically, in his service, and known by the title of "Comédiens du Roi," and his Majesty had an undoubted right to decide what music should be performed in his own theatre.

But though engaged in an unequal contest, the partisans of Italian music held their own gallantly, and, with the exception perhaps of the brooding Jean-Jacques and the severe d'Alembert, seem to have got a great deal of amusement out of the fray. It was their custom on Opera nights,[1] to muster in force in that corner of the pit immediately below the box set apart for the Queen. Their opponents, on their side, stationed themselves beneath the box reserved for the King, and the two parties were, hence, colloquially known as the Queen's and the King's Corner respectively. The strife of tongues was carried on with great spirit by these opposing factions until the conservative party determined on bringing matters to a climax by a *coup d'état*. A Gascon composer, one Mondonville, much in favour at Court, had written a mediocre opera, which at this delicate conjuncture he decided upon producing. Though reckoning confi-

[1] Operatic performances were held only three times a week.

dently on the support of Madame de Pompadour, and of the whole patriotic party, he felt a nervous terror of the formidable criticism of the "Queen's Corner," and entered into preliminary negotiations with the chiefs of that section, humbly promising that, if they would forbear from condemning his piece on the first night, he for his part would make it his business at once to meet their wishes by composing another opera quite in the Italian style. The revolutionary party were, according to Grimm, so delighted by the complacent self-sufficiency of this undertaking that they had some thoughts of agreeing to the compromise. But the decision was taken out of their hands by superior authority. On the day fixed for the first representation of Mondonville's opera the whole pit was, by Madame de Pompadour's contrivance, filled, from twelve o'clock onwards, with the King's guards from Versailles. When the customary occupants of the Queen's Corner arrived at the usual hour they found their places taken, and were obliged to seek standing room either in "paradise" (*i.e.* the gallery) or in the corridors. They were unable to see the stage all evening, but vociferous applause from gallant and loyal occupants of the pit assured them that Mondonville's piece was enjoying a success unparalleled in the annals of the Opera.

Backed by such irresistible arguments the triumph of French Opera was secure. When the Italian troupe was finally dismissed from Paris, which was not for some time later, Grimm proposed that the Queen's Corner should, as a parting stroke, attend their last performance in mourning. In case their places in the pit should again be usurped they were beforehand to secure two front boxes, and in that prominent

position pay the last duties to Italian music by melancholy silence and, if possible, tears. The delightful boyishness of the proposition makes us rather regret that it was not adopted, for the sufficient reason, says Grimm, that "the mourners would in all probability have been requested to finish the funeral service in the parish church of the Bastille." As it was, d'Alembert, whose attitude in the discussion had made him obnoxious to Madame de Pompadour, found his hope of a pension from the King indefinitely deferred, and President Hénault, a devoted admirer of French music, had now a public as well as a private ground of enmity against him. He had the compensation, however, of making a proselyte in Julie de Lespinasse, who came to Paris just after the departure of the Italians, and while the echoes of the controversy still resounded. That d'Alembert soon converted her to his views[1] may be inferred from the humorous disapprobation expressed by Hénault in the highly complimentary "portrait" already referred to, "You don't understand music a bit!" It is rather piquant to imagine d'Alembert playing airs from Italian compositions on the harpsichord and entreating his sympathising disciple to compare them with the home-grown productions which are now, unhappily, all

[1] When Gluck, about twenty years later, electrified the musical world of Paris, Julie was among his warmest admirers, and in the midst of a very terrible personal trouble found some consolation in going over and over again to hear his opera of *Orpheus*. Though apparently not musical, in the strict sense of the term, she seems, by sheer force of intelligence, to have acquired a position of authority as a critic of music no less than of literature. Grimm, writing a year after her death, observes that, if she were still alive, the war between the rival schools of Gluck and Piccini which was then raging, and which, unlike the earlier question of French *versus* Italian music, had created a schism within the Encyclopedic camp itself, would never have been permitted to attain its present proportions.

that she can hope to hear at the Opera House. Then the president enters, and the subject must be changed with all convenient speed! Every indication did indeed appear to show that destiny had, to use d'Alembert's own words, intended these two to belong to one another all through life, but the result was far from being such as he then, with trembling hope, foresaw.

CHAPTER XI

THE NEW THEOLOGY AND ITS EXPONENTS

D'ALEMBERT was certainly in this respect more fortunate than the conventional lover of romance —that he was far from having leisure to brood undisturbed over his rising passion and the difficulties besetting it. To say nothing of scientific research, the work of the Encyclopedia, to which at this time he devoted himself unsparingly, made large demands upon his time and energy. Like most, we might almost say like all, of the leaders in this undertaking he had been religiously brought up. The teaching staff at the Collège des Quatre Nations, pious ecclesiastics of the Jansenist way of thinking, seem to have maintained pleasant and kindly relations with their gifted alumnus both during his school life and after it, and were at first not without hopes that under their influence he might bring his intellect to the support of their much controverted theological tenets. They lent him numerous books of devotion, by which, as is the wont of the natural man, and yet more of the natural boy, he was exceedingly bored, and when he amicably declined to pursue this line of study any further they suggested that he would perhaps find controversy more interesting. Anything like a train of reasoning had always a strong fascination for d'Alembert, and he managed to read through a large portion of the theologico-polemical works recommended to him with about the same degree both of interest and edi-

fication as that derived by Stalky and his friends from "Eric" and "St Winifred's."

The theory that it was this intimate study of theology which drove d'Alembert into the anti-theological camp is tempting in its epigrammatic fitness, but probably far wide of the mark. Most likely he could not himself have clearly explained by what circumstance, or by whose influence, he was led to renounce all belief in revealed religion, for the truth is that scepticism was then in the air. To trace to its origin the great wave of free thought which in the eighteenth century swept over France would here be plainly impossible. It will be sufficient briefly to notice three great books, all dating from about the middle of the century, and supposed to indicate the high-water mark to which that incoming flood had by this time attained. These are Montesquieu's "Esprit des Lois," published in 1748; Buffon's "Natural History" (1749), and the Encyclopedia itself, of which the first volume appeared in 1751. The casual modern reader unacquainted with the conditions under which these three works were produced might well feel some surprise at the storm of terrified rage excited by them in the clerical party. From a twentieth-century point of view the orthodoxy of the writers would seem, so far as outward expression is concerned, unimpeachable, and even a little excessive. But when circumstances are known to be such that no author can openly say what he really means, the art of reading between lines and interpreting reticences is brought to a perfection scarcely conceivable by those accustomed to a better condition of things. In the France of those days no book could, in the first place, be published at all unless it obtained the approval of a censor appointed for this

purpose by Government. Once published it might at any moment be suppressed if anything of a seditious or irreligious tendency was discovered and pointed out to the authorities by competent persons, and very serious consequences, extending to exile and imprisonment and, by the letter of the law, even to death might befall both author and publisher.

It is plain that under such a system no one who aimed at making himself heard could afford to display any open disrespect for established institutions, political or religious, and this the conservative party thoroughly understood, and were wary accordingly. In vain did Montesquieu lavish his pity on countries "so unfortunate as to have a religion not given by God." The theologians were quite acute enough to see that for him all religions had a value differing in degree rather than in kind. In vain did Buffon censure the impiety of English scientists in endeavouring to bring the Deluge within the domain of physical law. They put the right interpretation on his grave profession of faith: "No characteristic of a miracle is so unmistakable as the impossibility of explaining its effects by natural causes," and his careful enumeration of all the reasons which rendered untenable any but a miraculous explanation of the Flood as described in Genesis. In vain did d'Alembert, the hardest, though the most cautious, hitter of the three, profess his astonishment that divines should foresee any danger from "the weak attacks" of reason upon a Faith "sent down from Heaven to men," and "guaranteed by the promises of God Himself." His critics were fully sensible, as he certainly intended that they should be, of the irony underlying this, and in a yet more marked degree the following pronouncement:—

"Besides, however absurd a religion may be (and only impiety could bring such a reproach against ours), it is never philosophers who destroy it. Even when they teach the truth, they content themselves with the bare demonstration, and do not force anyone to acknowledge it."[1]

Unlike the majority of modern English agnostics, d'Alembert, with all his party, fell into the grievous, but for them scarcely avoidable, error of identifying Christianity with the only form of it familiar to themselves—with the Romish Church, that is, as it existed in France during that period of accumulated ineptitude and corruption preceding the great Revolution. Every attack on orthodoxy meant for him a blow struck against ignorance, deceitfulness, and intolerance, and that high standard of duty which, unlike many of the Encyclopedists, he had saved out of the wreck of religious beliefs, was only an additional motive force to urge him onward in the fray.

The circumstances through which that blessed word Encyclopedia (sufficiently familiar, though in a slightly different connection, to modern ears) became the battle-cry of a disintegrating and reforming movement are, in themselves, by no means remarkable. Le Breton, a Parisian bookseller, or, as we should say, publisher, had formed the project of bringing out a French version of the "Cyclopedia, or Universal Dictionary of the Arts and Sciences," by Ephraim Chambers, published in 1727. Before the work of translation was accomplished the person to whom it had been entrusted died, and Le Breton thereupon had recourse to Diderot, who was known to possess the qualification, then rather unusual, of being a good

[1] "Discours préliminaire de l'Encyclopédie."

DIDEROT

AFTER GREUZE

English scholar. His fertile brain conceived the idea of recasting the work of Chambers and giving to it a much wider scope.[1] The scheme was approved by Le Breton, who, in partnership with three other publishers, undertook all the expenses of production. Diderot was appointed editor in chief at a salary of fifty pounds a year, and d'Alembert assistant-editor on the same terms. These two enlisted the services of some fifty or sixty collaborators, many of them distinguished men, who in most cases desired no payment for their contributions. The Encyclopedia, which appeared volume by volume, sold, when completed, for from thirty to forty pounds. The total profits of the publishers are said to have amounted to over £100,000, an enormous sum for that period.

So remarkable a financial success bears sufficient testimony to the attraction possessed by any book which, under a despotic Government and an intolerant religious system, is thought to aim at the subversion of both these institutions—an attraction lacking to the best-advertised encyclopedia of our own experience. Such was indeed to some extent the object which Diderot and d'Alembert, ably supported by Voltaire and other coadjutors selected as sharing their opinions, had set before themselves. Though the fear of the censor was inevitably ever before their eyes, they still managed to insinuate their views in every possible connection, sometimes with much finesse, and sometimes after a fashion which reminds us of Mr Dick's Memorial and the head of Charles the First. But, as Mr John Morley has pointed out, we

[1] The Encyclopedia of Chambers was comprised in two volumes; that of Diderot extended over seventeen, besides seven of illustrations.

should be doing the Encyclopedists a great injustice by supposing that their campaign was solely, or even primarily, one of destruction. The encouragement of industry, the diffusion of education, above all the promotion of better and more natural relations between man and man, the inculcation of justice, integrity and humanity, were prominent items in their propaganda, and the eagerness with which these doctrines were received plainly showed that they appealed to aspirations already stirring in the hearts of many readers.

These softer impulses, known in the language then current as the return to Nature and the cultivation of sensibility, did indeed almost everywhere show themselves side by side with the fiercer instinct of revolt. Throughout the literature of the day their existence can plainly be traced, especially in that passion for English fiction which was just becoming a fashionable craze. The eyes of all the Encyclopedist faction were in those days turned longingly towards England as a country administered on principles of liberty, toleration, and philanthropy which, though falling far short of latter-day aspirations, were much in advance of those acknowledged in France. Their Anglomania, as it was called, received a strong additional impetus from the publication of Richardson's novels, which were translated into French almost as soon as they appeared in English. That passion for accurate and realistic detail, which with Richardson was almost an obsession, had a strangely stimulating effect when contrasted with the complete artificiality of current French fiction. Besides this, the reading public had an admiration for virtue, quite as "Platonic" certainly as Carlyle's enthusiasm for silence, yet genuine in its way; and

the spectacle of Pamela emerging triumphant from every temptation, and rewarded with the heart and hand of her repentant admirer, appealed to their sympathies in a manner rather inexplicable at the present day. With the appearance of "Clarissa," that masterly picture of an ideal woman for which "Pamela" had been, as it were, the crude and clumsy study, public enthusiasm rose, more comprehensibly, to fever heat. The warm life which still palpitates through every page of those eight volumes seemed a veritable revelation to minds cloyed with perpetual unreality and convention. They were charmed moreover with the spirit of philanthropy which, within certain closely defined limits, is always conspicuous in Richardson's work. Even Lovelace, it will be remembered, was a good landlord, whose tenants prospered under his rule, and it was partly this characteristic of his which led Clarissa to think that he had in him the makings of a decent man. As for Pamela and her excellent (and most unreal!) parents, were they not glorious examples of natural worth triumphant over every disadvantage of humble station and commanding respect from all classes of society? The publication in 1761 of Rousseau's "Nouvelle Heloïse" marks a further development of the new fiction, and one more in harmony with national, or rather with racial, habits of thought. Our first impulse certainly on learning that some minds were able to trace an analogy between Rousseau's Julie and Richardson's Clarissa is one of indignant amazement: but we must in justice remember that to Rousseau's public the conception of a girl who brings a past to the altar, but lives it down and becomes a model wife, was decidedly an effort in the direction of virtue, and one,

perhaps, more congenial to Latin ideals than that of an absolutely pure nature like Clarissa's. Proceeding in our comparison between the two authors we are at once struck by Rousseau's immeasurable inferiority to Richardson in the faculty of characterisation, a faculty indeed almost wholly lacking in Jean-Jacques. But on the other hand we must set that glowing passion for Nature, which Rousseau may be said to have first introduced into prose fiction, and that fermenting leaven of humanitarian democracy, hereafter to display itself more fully in "Emile" and the "Contrat Social." Neither of those mighty ideals was anywhere within the range of Richardson's accurate but restricted powers of vision.

Plunged suddenly into this vortex of new ideas, Julie de Lespinasse assimilated them with the eagerness which might be expected from a girl of ardent nature who had never yet tasted the joy of a free interchange of thought with men intellectually her superiors. It is plain that the books which were fashionable during the earlier years of her abode in Paris had a strong and lasting influence in fixing the bent of her opinions and sympathies. To the end of her life she prized the "immortal Richardson" above all other authors. She "read and re-read" him; at first doubtless in translations, but afterwards in the original. "My soul throbs in unison with the broken heart of Clarissa," she writes twenty years after the date of her first acquaintance with that most lovable of heroines. She has a "passion" for Jean-Jacques, whose writings have, she admits, an almost dangerous fascination for her. She repeats the axioms of Montesquieu as if they were gospel. For years her cherished aspiration is to meet the author of the

"Natural History," though when the introduction is at last, through the interposition of a good-natured friend accomplished, her disillusionment is bitter on hearing the great man reply to some critical remark about the difficulties of literary style: "Devil take it, that's another pair of shoes."[1]

On their negative side, however, the new doctrines never obtained such complete mastery over her as over her mentor, d'Alembert, who had the courage, rare indeed at that epoch, to pass to his final account unsustained by the last rites of the Church, thus calmly forgoing his claim to Christian burial. Julie de Lespinasse could not bring herself, either during her lifetime or on her deathbed, to sever all outward connection with the Faith in which she had been brought up, but that the sceptical habit had invaded her whole mind, and left her doubtful, and sometimes less than doubtful, concerning the teachings of that Faith, no one familiar with her letters will deny.

Meanwhile the Encyclopedia was pursuing its triumphant but by no means unobstructed career. The first two volumes had appeared and the third was in the press when (in February 1752) the whole work was suddenly suppressed by Government. For some time the storm raged fiercely, but at last blew over, and in November 1753, the prohibition was removed and the third volume permitted to appear. D'Alembert had during that year stood for election to the Academy, but withdrew his candidature on learning that the King had personally interposed to prevent the nomination of some other aspirants, obnoxious like himself to the ruling powers, and that a similar exercise of the royal prerogative was to be

[1] Sleeves in the French idiom.

dreaded in his own case. This reverse, which he was inclined to attribute even more to the hostile influence of President Hénault than to the evil reputation of the Encyclopedia, was deeply felt by d'Alembert. In his letters to Madame du Deffand he is liberal in his "don't care" protestations with regard to this as well as other disappointments, but these lofty professions by no means imposed upon his quickwitted friend. She had set her heart upon seeing him a member of the Academy, and on her return to Paris began, in spite of his rather surly remonstrances, to work towards the accomplishment of that object.

Mingled with her friendship for d'Alembert, there was a touch of personal ambition. "To make an Academician" was, for a Parisian lady, the highest test of social and intellectual supremacy. In the earlier part of the century it had been said that nobody who had not obtained the approval of Madame de Lambert stood a chance of being elected to the Academy. In days to come an impression of the same kind was to obtain concerning Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. Madame du Deffand, who came between the two, coveted for her own part a share of this distinction, and in view of the next vacancy among the Forty commenced that system of wire pulling which, if we are to believe Daudet, is even now indispensable for obtaining entrance to the Academy. It was hard work, for one of the rival candidates had behind him a strong party, headed by a certain Duchesse de Chaulnes, who chanced to be one of Madame du Deffand's pet aversions, but was nevertheless a highly influential person. A vigorous campaign of canvassing ensued, under the able leadership of these feminine generals respectively. The good-natured president,

who even when resentful was seldom vindictive, consented, on Madame du Deffand's entreaty, to overlook the delinquencies, chronological and musical, of her protégé, and employed his influence, considerable in Court circles, to support the candidature of d'Alembert. Meanwhile Julie de Lespinasse looked on and learned her first lesson in that science of social diplomacy for which she was hereafter to attain such celebrity.

The election took place at the end of November 1754. To the last, the result seemed doubtful, for, setting aside the fascinations of the Duchesse de Chaulnes, a noted beauty and coquette, her favourite candidate, the Abbé de Boismont, was, in his clerical capacity, and having regard to the strong ecclesiastical element within the Academy, a dangerous competitor for the sub-editor of the Encyclopedia. But in the end the claims of science prevailed over those of clericalism, and d'Alembert thus attained the honour, to which no Frenchman is ever in his heart insensible, of ranking among the "immortal" Forty.

His position, both monetary and otherwise, henceforth steadily improved, and for two or three years the work of the Encyclopedia proceeded in comparative tranquillity. But in 1757 another tempest arose, and one which had the disastrous effect of dividing the "philosophic" party against itself. In the summer of 1756 d'Alembert had allowed himself the much-needed holiday of a visit to Voltaire at his country house, Les Délices. For many years he had maintained a correspondence with the illustrious exile—the "patriarch" of the Encyclopedist faction—and the two great men professed a warm mutual admiration, which did not always prevent them from saying rather spiteful things

behind each other's backs. At Les Délices, d'Alembert was of course introduced to all the leading men in Genevan society, including several Protestant ministers, who were delighted to make the acquaintance of a person so distinguished. Himself endowed with all the characteristic virtues of Puritanism and with not a few of its characteristic defects, d'Alembert felt a natural affinity for these clear-headed, austere, argumentative disciples of Calvin, the rather because, like the Scottish Church in our own day, they had already, by almost insensible degrees, drifted far away from the hideous doctrines originally imposed upon them by their founder. It was, besides, an unusual experience for him nowadays to be favourably regarded by ecclesiastics of any persuasion, and he determined that the intelligence and enlightenment of Geneva should, under the letter G., receive due honour at his hand in the forthcoming volume of the Encyclopedia.

Unfortunately, his eulogium took the form of a statement that the Genevan clergy had virtually lapsed into Socinianism, and this, though from d'Alembert's point of view a most sincere compliment, was not so regarded by the persons chiefly concerned. The ministers, horrified, and no doubt in good faith, at the interpretation put upon their large-minded theories of Biblical criticism, convoked a synod for the express purpose of recording their protest against it. Nor was this the only trouble brought upon d'Alembert by his well-intentioned article on "Geneva." At the instigation, doubtless, of Voltaire, who had a grievance of his own against the Genevans on this subject, he had qualified his encomium by expressing regret that in a city otherwise so free from illiberal prejudices, the theatre, for which, as we know, d'Alembert had

himself a strong liking, should be regarded as a device of Satan. This suggestion aroused the righteous indignation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, that strangest censor of morals, who was now tending towards his final rupture with the Encyclopedists, and was not ill-pleased at the opportunity of avenging, on public grounds, his private (and chiefly imaginary) grievances against them. With rather less than his usual eloquence, and even more than his usual wrong-headedness, he denounced the pernicious attempt of d'Alembert to corrupt the pure morality of Geneva by introducing such soul-destroying influences as those of the stage. D'Alembert replied, and a vigorous controversy ensued.

There were difficulties from without no less than from within. The attempted assassination of the King by Damiens (in January 1757) had strengthened the antipathy of the ruling powers to any literature suspected of a subversive tendency. Early in 1759 the Encyclopedia, which had now got as far as the seventh volume, was again suppressed. The prohibition was soon withdrawn, but meanwhile d'Alembert, disgusted by such a combination of calamities, had decided on abandoning his editorial position. It must be owned that few things in his life became him less than this desertion, by which the whole burden of completing the work was thrown upon his more loyal colleague, Diderot, who in vain entreated him to reconsider his decision.

If we may believe Diderot's account of the matter, the standpoint assumed by d'Alembert was by no means remarkable for moral elevation. He was willing to go on, he said, if their employers, the four booksellers, would raise his fees. Fifty pounds a

year, though worth perhaps three times as much then as now, was certainly no adequate recompense for duties so onerous and responsible as his; but it appears that he had received bonuses amounting to between three and four hundred pounds additional. Of this Diderot now reminded him, and was met with the surprised remonstrance, so strangely modern in its tone: "What, Diderot, are *you* taking sides with the publishers?"

Lest we should be inclined to judge d'Alembert too hardly, we must remember that he had already devoted ten years of his life to the Encyclopedia, that he had many other claims upon his attention, and that he continued to undertake the supervision of mathematical articles, and in other ways still made himself very useful to Diderot. The great work was finally completed in 1764.

CHAPTER XII

OUTLAWS BY PROFESSION

ROUSSEAU, as d'Alembert sarcastically observed, had this advantage over most persons who rail against the theatre, that he had himself had considerable experience of the evil thing which he would fain have withheld others from touching. It was, indeed, mainly to his theatrical and operatic productions that he owed the first commencements of his fame; but such irrelevant trifles as his own practice in any matter never interfered with the unselfish concern of Jean-Jacques for the morals of his fellow-creatures.

His chief argument was grounded upon the profligacy then a very general characteristic of the theatrical profession, and the corrupting influence thus exercised upon society in general; and he undertook to prove that a virtuous life was, by the nature of things, incompatible with the duties of an actor, or more especially of an actress. The perpetual counterfeiting of the passions, the incessant appeal to public admiration, the elaborate personal adornment habitual on the stage must, in his view, inevitably entail the moral degradation of women obliged to practise them, and, once corrupted, the actresses (wicked creatures) were sure to drag down their male colleagues to their own level.

D'Alembert, in his reply, did not attempt to deny that actresses were generally immoral, but he strenuously maintained that they were capable of much

better things. As it was, there were many who, in spite of every temptation, long retained their virtue, and the reason that so few persevered to the end was to be found in the fact that no encouragement to do so was offered them. If something were done in this direction they would, in his opinion, become "the best-conducted class of women in the community."

In this last statement d'Alembert certainly makes some approach to the wilful exaggeration of his opponent, yet perhaps the difference in their views concerning the robustness of female virtue is scarcely more than we might naturally expect to exist between a man of austere morals and a man notoriously the reverse. But d'Alembert undoubtedly put his finger on a crucial point in the controversy when he accounted for the prevalence of vice by the slightness of the encouragement afforded to virtue. What, indeed, did it avail an actress to refuse the pleasures of sin when, by the mere fact of her profession, she remained, however pure her life, excluded from all communion with the visible Church on earth, and, as devout Catholics were bound to believe, from all hopes of heaven hereafter? Can we greatly blame the women of the Comédie Française for the shameless effrontery with which they flaunted their unauthorised husbands and illegitimate children when we remember that Christian marriage (and civil marriage did not then exist) was refused them so long as they remained on the stage?

It is much to the honour of the philosophic party generally that they were, like d'Alembert, earnest in their protest against this unjust and barbarous code. In an article in the Encyclopedia on the dramatic profession, Voltaire takes the opportunity of representing the very different attitude of clerical opinion in

England, where he himself had witnessed the interment of "Mademoiselle Olfilds"[1] in Westminster Abbey, "side by side with Newton and the kings." There can be no doubt that, as he wrote, he was in his heart contrasting this stately ceremony with the stealthy, midnight burial of that never-forgotten friend of his youth, the gifted Adrienne Lecouvreur. More than once, throughout his later life, when the question of reconciliation with the Church arises, we find him repeating: "I don't want them to throw *me* in the gutter as they did with poor Lecouvreur." According to d'Alembert, it was on the ground of this terrible example that the "patriarch" justified his feigned submission to ecclesiastical authority on his deathbed. "He had," adds d'Alembert calmly, "a great aversion, *I do not know why* (!), to this method of interment," And chivalrously anxious for the honour of his ancient leader, now departed, he declares that he had encouraged Voltaire in the subterfuge which, for himself when his own hour came, he utterly disdained.

The above phrase, "thrown in the gutter,"[2] though commonly employed concerning the burial of excommunicated persons, must not be too literally taken, suggesting as it does a degree of horror in excess of the actual facts. It merely meant that the bodies of such persons might not rest in consecrated ground. Sometimes they were admitted to that portion of the cemetery reserved for unbaptised infants, but there were cases in which the clergy refused even this measure of hospitality to the dead. Then the civil authorities had to be approached, and their permission obtained for burial in some unhallowed and secluded spot. This was the only course possible in regard to

[1] Nance Oldfield. [2] Jetté à la voirie.

Adrienne Lecouvreur, though the priest who excluded her body from the graveyard of her parish church had been in the habit of relying on her for assistance in his charities. An authorisation was granted by the Minister of Police for her interment by night in a remote corner at the edge of the Seine. One friend alone, a certain M. de Laubinière, was permitted to attend her to her last resting-place. Voltaire, in the noble poem inspired by burning indignation at the treatment awarded to this genius of the tragic stage, has told us how her faithful friend "bore, in charity, that form but yesterday renowned for beauty, packed away in a hackney-coach, to the margin of our river." A hole was dug by two street porters, the body was hastily thrust in and covered with earth, and so, with less ceremony than is often bestowed on the funeral of a dog, the last rites were paid to this idol of the Parisian public. The exact position of her grave remained unknown to the world for nearly half-a-century, and was then discovered by workmen digging the foundations of a house to be raised on that spot. During the Revolution her body was removed to a more decorous burial-place.

The actor and actress were under the ban of the State no less than under that of the Church. Like the married women of our own country within the memory of some of us, they had no recognised existence in law. Members of the Comédie Française and of the Opera had, indeed, in their capacity of "King's Comedians," certain important privileges. They were exempt from the jurisdiction of the police and, in the case of women, from parental and marital control, but, on the other hand, they were in absolute subjection to the Gentlemen of the King's House-

hold, who were entrusted with the duty of supervising them. Every action of their professional lives was regulated by this arbitrary authority, and any attempt at rebellion was promptly punished by an indefinite term of imprisonment. Yet it is the strangest characteristic of a strange situation that these outlawed and excommunicated beings had by no means to complain of the social stigma which, in nations and periods otherwise far more tolerant, has often attached to their profession. An actress of any celebrity was made welcome in the most aristocratic Parisian circles, and not only great nobles, but their wives, took pride in numbering her among their acquaintance. The fine ladies of the Ancien Régime did not, to do them justice, require from women of inferior social position a higher moral standard than that which they themselves acknowledged, and they had, in general, a keen appreciation for talent.

The seething resentment engendered by so anomalous a condition of things was brought to a culminating point on the appearance of Rousseau's diatribe against the theatre, which was the signal for a vehement warfare on paper. Amongst those who, besides d'Alembert, appeared as advocates for the defence, were many members of the anathematised profession, and chief of them Mademoiselle Clairon, the celebrated tragic actress, then at the height of her reputation. Though by no means so attractive a personality as poor Adrienne Lecouvreur, Clairon was by nature a reformer—a circumstance which, perhaps, accounts for the strong sympathy existing between her and the Encyclopedists—the party of reform. She imagined the bold design of delivering herself and her colleagues from the stigma of excom-

munication, believing that, if the Church could be induced to lighten her hand, the State would soon follow suit.

Her first attempt was an unfortunate one. Distrusting her own unaided powers, she confided the task of preparing her grand petition and remonstrance to a lawyer, one M. Huerne de la Mothe. This gentleman accordingly drew up a statement of the case, Stage *versus* Church, which showed much learning, but proved so obnoxious to the susceptibilities of those in authority that it was ordered to be burnt by the common hangman. Undeterred by this rebuff, Clairon pursued her agitation, incidentally involving herself in a somewhat unseemly squabble with the Gentlemen of the Household, by whom she was summarily sent to prison for insubordination. A tremendous sensation ensued, and Clairon, on her release, determined, with the warm approval of Voltaire and the other Encyclopedists, to abandon her profession unless something were done to remedy the intolerable grievances attaching to it.

She and her party now resorted to the expedient of petitioning Louis XV. to place the Comédie Française on the same footing as the Opera, which, by a curious contradiction, was subject to no anathema, civil or religious. A memorial, this time most carefully drawn with much help from Voltaire, was presented in 1766 for that purpose to the King, but he refused to entertain any such project, and the whole scheme fell through. Clairon, true to her threat, left the Comédie Française, and appeared henceforth only at quasi-private performances in the houses of the great. The first use she made of her liberty was to effect, somewhat ostentatiously, that

reconciliation with the Church which, on her own showing, she had always most ardently though vainly desired.

The pose maintained throughout by Clairon, of a pious Christian unjustly excluded from the consolations of religion, may well excite a smile if considered in conjunction with her manner of life, which was at no time remarkable either for sobriety, righteousness, or godliness. Yet, though quite as singular a reformer as her enemy, Jean-Jacques himself, we cannot deny her the possession of a reforming instinct almost as powerful in its way as his own. She failed, indeed, in effecting the reform which she had most at heart (and which delayed its coming in full for nearly a century longer), but her influence on the traditions of the national drama was equally beneficent and enduring. Like most French actors in those days she was born to a humble and not over-reputable station in life. Destined by a poor but far from honest mother to the profession of seamstress, she showed from the first an unconquerable aversion to the drudgery of the needle. The true dramatic vocation was entwined with every fibre of her being, and before she had ever seen a theatre she learned the first lessons in stage-craft by watching from her bedroom window the private rehearsals of an actress over the way. Her mother forbade her to think of the stage, by no means on account of the moral risks thereby involved, which would probably have been much the same had the girl continued nominally to sew for her living, but out of awe for the mysterious penalties of excommunication. Ultimately, however, Clairon, then aged thirteen, carried the day, and after some years of provincial experience made her first appearance, in

1743, at the Comédie Française, in the character of Phèdre. The public was speedily convinced of her genius, and a few more years made her the acknowledged queen of the Parisian stage. It was then that she executed the project suggested to her by the dramatist Marmontel, in whose plays she had "created" several principal rôles, and with whom her relations had been for a time more than friendly, of using her influence to emancipate the national theatre from the bondage of sundry bad old traditions hitherto unquestioned.

It had been till then considered a fundamental principle of histrionics that acting should not, save in comedy, be modelled upon Nature. For tragedy there was a regulated code of declamation and gesture, and any departure from it was supposed to be derogatory to the dignity of the cothurnus. To this curious convention was added an entire absence of the slightest attempt at fitness in costume. The players, both men and women, were dressed, generally with great magnificence, in the height of contemporary fashion. When we remember that another Procrustean law restricted the range of tragedy to far-past (preferably classical) epochs, we can imagine the effect produced by ancient Greeks and Romans masquerading in powder and patches, hoops and trains, ruffles and high heels, Court coats and knee-breeches.

It may truly be said of Clairon that she changed all this. She had the courage to break through the vicious convention of sing-song declamation and stilted gesture and to make her acting an intenser form of real life, rather than something in its essence apart from reality. Her first essay on these new lines was made

during a provincial tour, and met with such success that she was encouraged to continue the same method on her return to Paris. Next she took in hand the reformation of theatrical costume, beginning with the part of Electra in the two tragedies of that name (by Voltaire and Crébillon respectively). The unfortunate Achaian princess had hitherto been represented by ladies stylishly attired in pink satin relieved by black jet *motifs*. Clairon did not yet venture to go the length of anything so inelegant as a Greek *chiton*, but she compromised matters by wearing a plain black trailing gown, an unfashionable, and indeed untidy, *coiffure*, and no perceptible rouge nor powder. Above all, she laid aside her crinoline. The magnitude of this last innovation can only be fully evident to those who realise the prominent part usurped by this article of dress in the social life of the eighteenth century, when ball invitations bore requests to ladies to come *sans panier*, and when the highest virtue which long-suffering masculinity could discern in a woman was that the circumference of her skirt should want a yard of the fashionable width. Thanks to Mademoiselle Clairon, the *panier* henceforth disappeared, at least from historical tragedy. Her example was all-powerful with the "profession," and the 20th of August 1754 marks an important epoch in the annals of the Comédie Française. On that day (about four months after the arrival of Julie de Lespinasse in Paris) Voltaire's tragedy, *The Orphan of China*, was represented for the first time, and the newspapers record as an unprecedented circumstance that all the actresses in this performance appeared *sans panier*. Not only so, but some sort of attempt was made at least to suggest the Chinese costume by a compromise

which would doubtless appear laughable enough to us now, but was certainly a step in the right direction. The reform thus inaugurated was extended by the energetic Clairon throughout the whole theatrical *répertoire*. On one occasion she carried her devotion to realism so far as to dress the part of a heroine suddenly aroused from sleep in a simple *robe-de-nuit*, thereby (who would have thought it?) greatly scandalising the decorous instincts of her audience. Courage indeed, and not only courage but disinterestedness, was required for her work of innovation, for the whole of her rich stage wardrobe—which represented, she said, a cost of over £1200, and might under the old conditions have served to the end of her career—was henceforth of no use to her.

Her example was all powerful with regard to naturalness in acting no less than in dress, and for the amelioration which she effected in both these directions she received the warmest encomiums from the whole philosophic party. Marmontel singled her out for special panegyric in his Encyclopedia article on "Declamation." D'Alembert wrote that Mademoiselle Clairon's talents were above his praise; that she was true to Nature alike in her acting and her costume, and that her example had rendered great services to the Théâtre Français, and even to the Opera. But Diderot, not perhaps from entirely disinterested motives, was the most enthusiastic of all. The fact was that he had his own pet project in the matter of theatrical reform, involving no less an achievement than the introduction of a species of drama new to the French stage, and he naturally considered the co-operation of this influential actress a supremely desirable thing.

MADEMOISELLE CLAIRON

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY COCHIN IN THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE

The traditions of the national theatre had hitherto drawn a sharp dividing line between the respective spheres of tragedy and comedy, the one being, on the whole, restricted to great historical or mythological themes, and the other to the domestic or more humble side of existence. Diderot proposed to alter all this by introducing a kind of serious drama, not properly either tragic or comic, which should be written in prose instead of stately Alexandrines, and deal with the facts and emotions of everyday contemporary life. In furtherance of this excellent design, he produced two plays (*The Natural Son*, 1757, and *The Father of the Family*, 1758), neither of which obtained for some time the honour of representation, but which, notwithstanding, aroused a considerable ferment in the literary world. To modern taste these pioneer productions seem insipid and incoherent enough; but in their own day they gained the approval of so competent a critic as Lessing, and they certainly mark an era in the development of French drama. Like most innovations favoured by the Encyclopedists (who were understood to stand together in all such enterprises), the "new drama" met with a storm of opposition from the conservative party.

An unlucky chance embittered the controversy still further, by introducing what is euphemistically termed "the personal note." The Princesse de Robecq, daughter of the Maréchal de Luxembourg by his first marriage, a lady who contrived to combine a consuming zeal for religion with a way of life by no means religious, and had taken part prominently against the Encyclopedists, considered herself affronted by a reference in one of Diderot's many "introductions." (In the matter of lengthy prefaces to his

plays he was quite as unmerciful as Mr Bernard Shaw.) Nobody now seems able to identify the passage in question, and Diderot himself strenuously denied that he had ever had any offensive intention, but the Princess, whose morbid resentment was doubtless aggravated by ill-health, continued to brood over her wrong, and to seek some means of revenge. She found an instrument ready to her hand in one Charles Palissot, an indifferent critic and more than indifferent playwright, who, at her instigation, composed *The Comedy of the Philosophers*, a miserable parody of the *Femmes Savantes*, in which Diderot and his most prominent associates were, under the thin disguise of pseudonyms, held up to ridicule as the most odious and contemptible of men. The satire of Molière's delightful comedy was probably quite as unjust and ill-directed as that of Palissot's imitation, but the one is a work of genius, the other devoid of even the most superficial cleverness. Such as it was, however, it found favour with Madame de Robecq, who exerted all her influence to have it produced at the Comédie Française.

Her interest at Court was sufficient to remove any obstacles in that direction, and the actors (to whose collective judgment a new play was then submitted for approval, instead of to a *comité de lecture* as now) declared themselves, with one exception, in favour of an author so excellently patronised. Clairon alone, faithful to her friends the Encyclopedists, raised her voice against Palissot and all his works, but she was overborne, and the first representation of *Les Philosophes* took place on 2nd May 1760. The Princesse de Robecq was then within two months of her death from lung-disease, but, sustained by the

feverish energy peculiar to consumptive patients, she appeared on this first night in the house, leaning on the arm of Palissot, who was honoured with a seat in her box. Her deathlike appearance made a strong and painful impression on the audience, and before the end of the First Act she turned faint, and was obliged to go out.

A few days later there appeared an anonymous pamphlet, entitled "The Vision of Charles Palissot," which had been surreptitiously printed at Lyon, and was hawked about Paris by *colporteurs*. It was an extremely able satire, written by the Abbé Morellet (the author of several theological articles in the Encyclopedia), and it dealt with Palissot according to his deserts, and with his patroness in a manner which would seem inexcusably harsh but for Morellet's after assurance that when he wrote it he had no idea she was really dying. In the "Vision," Palissot (represented as a kind of Holy Willie) is supposed to review the past events of his (far from reputable) life, and to foresee with triumphant exultation the pleasant results which were to ensue for him on his devoting himself to the defence of religion. The Princess is introduced in these terms:

"And we shall see a great lady, sick to death, but desiring for all consolation that she may live long enough to be present at the first performance and say, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen *revenge*.' And this great lady shall found by her will a pious bequest, for ever to buy up all the pit tickets whenever the comedy is acted, and they shall be given away for the love of God, to people who will undertake to applaud."

To outward appearance, the dying woman received

this taunt in that spirit of insolently courageous imperturbability which all her class held it a duty to cultivate. She wrote a note in the third person to Clairon, whose antipathy to Palissot was well known, saying that she was "most anxious" to see the "vision," and had heard that Mademoiselle Clairon had some copies for sale, and would perhaps oblige her. The great actress replied with dignity that she felt convinced an insinuation so insulting to her could never have proceeded from the Princess herself, and that the note containing it, which she returned, was no doubt the work of a forger. But meanwhile Palissot had succeeded in procuring a specimen, and sent it to Madame de Robecq, endorsed, "with the author's compliments."

This treacherous stratagem had, as was intended, the effect of increasing her resentment against an enemy apparently so insulting, and almost the last use she made of her brief remaining span was to engage the minister Choiseul, formerly her lover, to wreak vengeance on the anonymous libeller. Through pressure put on one of the *colporteurs*, Morellet's name was discovered, and he was sent to expiate his error in the Bastille, but released at the end of a few weeks, on the intercession of the dead woman's stepmother, Madame de Luxembourg, who was induced by his friends Rousseau and d'Alembert to take pity on him. So ended this miserable quarrel which, curiously enough, was destined to exercise an influence on the fortunes of Julie de Lespinasse and of the man who silently adored her.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ROOT OF BITTERNESS

THE comedy of *The Philosophers* had aroused in d'Alembert a strong, and to a large extent a personal, feeling of resentment. It is true that Palissot, as in his private duty bound, had singled out Diderot for especial and practically undisguised vituperation. But there is little doubt that d'Alembert was also, though less openly, assailed under the title of Valère, a villainous adventurer who, by paying assiduous court to a rich and foolish widow, the object in private of his mockery, induces her to promise him the hand of her daughter and heiress, while shamelessly avowing to his friends that he has no love for the girl, who on her side is strongly averse to him. This was one of those libels, at once feeble and remote from truth, which theoretically have no power to hurt, and in practice are intensely resented. The whole contemporary world was agreed that good sense and sound judgment were as much the distinguishing qualities of Madame Geoffrin (the lady indicated) as disinterestedness and independence of d'Alembert. It was true that she had an only daughter who did not share her mother's predilection for the Encyclopedists, and had perhaps an especial objection to d'Alembert, but she had been married some twenty-seven years earlier to a nobleman quite unconnected with the philosophic party. Yet the fact remains that d'Alembert was deeply wounded by this miserable caricature and

displayed his indignation in a far from philosophical fashion.

"I have not been to see it [the play], and do not mean to go," he writes to Voltaire; and finding his correspondent inclined to blame Morellet for having "insulted a dying woman," he replies, with a touch of ferocity: "It's all very well to be a *dying woman*, but one need not be a viper for all that. You cannot have heard of the shameless way in which Madame de Robecq intrigued to force on the acting of Palissot's play . . . and that she had herself carried to the theatre on the first night, *dying* though she is. . . . I cannot see that a person so spiteful and vindictive as that deserves any pity at all. . . . Besides," he adds, more moderately, "the 'Vision' only said that she was very ill, and that is surely no crime."

It must be owned that there is something "not altogether quite nice" about such language when applied to a woman on the verge of death. In extenuation it may be urged that d'Alembert, as one of the Encyclopedist leaders, had suffered much from the enmity of Madame de Robecq. The same excuse unluckily cannot be alleged for the very similar stream of vituperation which he poured forth upon one who had proved herself a kind and serviceable friend to him, no other, in fact, than Madame du Deffand herself. He was firmly convinced that, in the controversy with which all Paris was ringing, she stood on the side of Palissot against himself and his party. In this he was mistaken, for in fact she satirised both sides with much impartiality. The Encyclopedists, excepting Voltaire and d'Alembert himself, displeased her fastidious taste by their deficiency in *bon ton*, and the devout faction were equally obnoxious to her from

their want of humour. D'Alembert, however, on slender evidence, concluded otherwise, and in a letter to Voltaire mentioned her as one of the avowed patronesses of Palissot's comedy, adding the graceful implication that in her quality of superannuated *demi-mondaine* she would naturally have much in common with a modern representative of the same profession such as Madame de Robecq. Reflections of this kind (expressed in language much too vigorous to be literally reproduced) are characteristic of d'Alembert, and, though almost a relief amid the boundless toleration of that period, they certainly show that he was not exempt from the failings commonly supposed to accompany superior virtue. Madame du Deffand, however, aided in a measure by the interposition of Voltaire, succeeded in clearing herself of the charge brought against her, and the quarrel was, after a fashion, made up, but on the man's side the fire still continued to smoulder, and four years later it blazed out once more, and this time only to be quenched by death.

It is evident indeed that his ill-feeling against Madame du Deffand was of older standing than the business of *The Philosophers*, since otherwise so serious a breach would scarcely, on so slight a pretext, have been made in a friendship which had lasted for seventeen years. By one who had no liking for d'Alembert (the daughter of Madame Geoffrin, above mentioned) the beginning of this change is assigned to a certain disastrous day when he accidentally overheard the blind woman retailing with much enjoyment to a circle of common friends some sarcastic remarks concerning himself contained in a letter from Voltaire. There is no antecedent improbability

in any portion of this story. D'Alembert, as we have already seen, could be vindictive enough, and, though Madame du Deffand was really in her way attached to him, she never hesitated between her friend and her joke. But the original source of bitterness lay deeper than any such surface disturbances, and proceeded from a cause more honourable to the philosopher. The man who can see the woman whom he loves unhappy and not forget both reason and friendship in espousing her cause against the person to whom he attributes her unhappiness is scarcely worth calling a man. And it was an influence precisely of this kind which severed d'Alembert from Madame du Deffand.

The relations between Julie de Lespinasse and her patroness had for some years continued to be entirely creditable to both. The girl had certainly some hardships to endure, but the congenial and appreciative atmosphere in which she found herself made them at first seem light in comparison with the miserable experiences at Champrond. "I hate myself," she wrote in after life, "for not being able to put up with mediocrity. I am very hard to please! But is it my fault? Just consider what my education has been! Madame du Deffand (for whatever else she wants she has brains enough), the president Hénault, the abbé Bon, the archbishops[1] of Toulouse and Aix, M. Turgot, M. d'Alembert, the abbé de Boismont, M. de Mora; these are the people who taught me to speak and think, and were good enough to consider me worth the trouble." On her side, she spared no trouble to please these people who received her so kindly, and above all the benefactress

[1] Loménie de Brienne and Boisgelin de Cicé.

who had brought her into their midst. We have seen how she won approbation from the most fastidious of Madame du Deffand's friends. She was no less successful in conciliating the servants of the house, an achievement involving greater difficulties. Her friendly relations with the excellent Devreux have already been noticed. They dated from Madame du Deffand's visit to Champrond in 1752, and were much approved by her, though she did not fail to rally her young protégée on being rather too polite to the lady's maid in bestowing on her the title of "Mademoiselle." Four or five years after Julie's installation at St Joseph, it is to her that Mademoiselle Devreux turns for help in a moment of great distress. A relation of hers has incurred the displeasure of his master, a powerful farmer-general, and has been subjected in consequence to a rigorous and illegal imprisonment. Two of his friends have in their possession certain documents exculpating the prisoner from all blame, and these it is their intention to lay before the unjust farmer-general; but in order to obtain a hearing it is necessary, or at least desirable, that they should be countenanced by a person of superior rank. In much perplexity of mind Devreux appeals to Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. The time is then between eight and nine on a February morning. Julie (poor girl) is in bed, but she instantly rises and accompanies the two men in Madame du Deffand's carriage, lent for the occasion. The examination of the papers proves a lengthy affair, and, feeling her presence to be a useful check on the proceedings, she remains in attendance till six that evening. For an unmarried woman of twenty-five thus, in behalf of a social inferior, voluntarily to subject herself to

fatigue, publicity, and possible insolence, was a rare thing in that day and country, and we herein recognise the germ of those qualities which were afterwards matured by the influence of Turgot.

Julie showed equal tact and good feeling in dealing with Madame du Deffand's family as with her servants. Strongly as Gaspard de Vichy had resented his sister's protection of his daughter, he had far too keen an eye for future contingencies to make a lasting quarrel of it, and, the mischief being once accomplished past recall, he magnanimously determined to forgive and forget. Accordingly, in the spring of 1755, or less than a year after Julie had come to live with Madame du Deffand, we find Gaspard's eldest son, Abel, in Paris, and on the best possible terms with his aunt and her companion. The boy, who, though under fifteen, had been already for some time in the army, had come, on the way to Champrond, to spend a part of his leave in the capital, where he had apparently a very pleasant holiday, and was, in fact, quite worn out with party and theatre going. He was delighted to meet once more with his beloved teacher and playfellow, whose real relationship with himself he did not learn for several years after, when it was revealed to him by his mother. His father, for reasons easily conjectured, was most anxious that he should make a good impression upon Madame du Deffand, and was perpetually writing him instructions to this end—instructions which, on a boy of his frank and honest nature, had probably an effect the reverse of that intended. Whether for this reason, or from mere youthful *gaucherie*, he seems more than once to have gone near to offending his formidable aunt, but he had a powerful advocate in Julie, who threw all her influence into the scale in his favour.

All through her life she had a deep and sisterly attachment for Abel. Nothing can be more charming than the tone of affectionate banter in which she writes to him about this time.

"Good-bye, my dear, for *Monsieur* seems to me too cold. I know, of course, that you are quite grown up now, and a very important person, but remember that I have known you since you were 'no higher than that.' You called me your dear love then, and I still deserve the name, so please don't let us be ceremonious with one another. I don't want you to call me *Mademoiselle* in your letters. Before people we must conform to custom, but in private I had rather not be kept at a distance."

With far more tact than Gaspard, she bases her exhortations to the boy concerning the duty of making himself agreeable to his aunt entirely on the higher ground of Madame du Deffand's fundamental affection for him, as demonstrated by her kindness in many instances. It is deeply touching also to observe how she craves for reconciliation with the relatives who had treated her so unkindly.

"I am overjoyed to hear from you that your mother is still so kind as to have a friendly remembrance of me. Please assure her of my gratitude. I hope that M. de Vichy's cold will have no serious results. It has been the universal malady here, and we have not had the right sort of weather for getting rid of it."

Perhaps there is a certain amount of intention in the succeeding passage.

"It is not the sort for going to the country either, but, all the same, we are going on Saturday to

Montmorenci to stay till Easter. It is a big business for your aunt to make a move like that, but she has been so pressed that she could not refuse. Besides she will be just as comfortable there as at home. M. and Madame la Maréchale de Luxembourg are extremely attentive, and we shall have all the people there whom we see most of here, M. le Président, Mesdames de Mirepoix and de Boufflers, M. de Pont-de-Veyle," etc.

The de Vichys knew enough of fashionable Paris to be aware that an invitation to Montmorenci was esteemed a high honour, and she was naturally not unwilling to let them know that it had been conferred upon her. Five years later we have another letter to Abel dated curiously enough from Montmorenci, and equally characteristic of an affectionate elder sister. The young man is again at home, this time on sick leave, and her tone is at once sympathetic and encouraging. In addition to his other troubles, he has had a quarrel with Madame du Deffand, but Julie has succeeded in setting things right, and in the spirit of a true peacemaker disclaims all credit for the achievement.

"I have nothing whatever to boast of in regard to your reconciliation with Madame du Deffand. It was a case of pushing an open door. She was very kindly disposed towards you all the time, and not at all angry with you. She takes great interest in all your concerns, and speaks her mind frankly to you, because she thinks you worth the trouble. So, my dear, don't be remorseful or uneasy, you are not only forgiven, but beloved."

In this letter she sends affectionate remembrances to both Abel's parents, from which fact we infer that she is now on friendly terms with Gaspard, as well as with his wife. There are also kind messages to the servants at Champrond, and a good-natured mention of Abel's younger brother,[1] who had now, in his turn, begun soldiering, and was not precisely winning golden opinions in his new calling. Her obvious desire to make the best of this far from lovable scapegrace, as of all the de Vichy family, shows how far she was removed from any wish to supplant them in the favour of Madame du Deffand. Her anxiety to prevent family dissensions did not stop here. When Abel, with boyish inconsequence, writes, on his arrival at home, to her instead of to his uncle, the Abbé de Champrond, who had been apparently his host at Paris, she carefully conceals this preference from the good priest, while gently rebuking the offender. "You ought to write to him, he will be gratified by the attention, and he deserves it." No one certainly was ever more exempt than she from the detestable spirit of mischief-making.

To Madame du Deffand, on her side, we must also allow the honour which is her due. We have seen that she displayed no resentment, but rather satisfaction, at the favour won by Julie from some of her oldest friends, both male and female. When a younger admirer appeared on the scene her behaviour appears to have been on the whole not unworthy of a responsible and conscientious guardian; though it is certainly from this incident, which took place when they had lived together for three or four years, that we must date the first perceptible straining of the relation between the aunt and niece. The hero

[1] The sister seems to have died some years earlier.

of this story was descended from a noble and ancient Irish family, which still exists at the present day, its head, Viscount Taaffe, being settled in Austria. Mr Taaffe (his Christian name is unknown, and it is not clear whether he was entitled to the prefix of Honourable) was in the habit of paying long visits to Paris, where he had numerous influential connections, at Court and elsewhere. Like many other distinguished foreigners, he obtained an introduction to Madame du Deffand, and became, for a time, a regular attendant at her *salon*. His appearance marks a momentous epoch in the experience of Julie de Lespinasse. Setting aside d'Alembert, of whose silent devotion she was perhaps scarcely conscious, her admirers hitherto had been all elderly men, such as Hénault, the Chevalier d'Aydie, and the Marquis d'Ussé, and it had never occurred to her to take any of them seriously. The feeling with which she inspired the newcomer was of a warmer kind, and was by her fully reciprocated, and Madame du Deffand suddenly awoke to the fact that a flourishing romance was in progress beneath her roof.

She strongly objected—why, in the absence of fuller information, we are unable to say. As M. de Ségur implies, it is not impossible that Taaffe had already a wife in Ireland, though at the same time it is scarcely likely, in the light of Julie's subsequent behaviour towards Guibert, that she would knowingly have encouraged the attentions of a married man. But, even setting aside this unpleasant possibility, one must take into account that the gallant Irishman's fortune probably consisted mainly of debts, and further, that the men of his nation, though far more attentive to unmarried women than Frenchmen, are

scarcely more in the habit of marrying for love than they are. Considering Julie's almost penniless condition, it was altogether unlikely that the affair could result in matrimony, and Madame du Deffand, with her hard-won experience of the seamy side of life, is not to be blamed for desiring, in her niece's interest, to put an end to it.

Of the two persons mainly concerned, the gentleman received her remonstrances with a docility which proves that he was in his heart convinced of their reasonableness. The Misses Berry, Horace Walpole's friends, had seen letters written by Taaffe to Madame du Deffand testifying alike to his affection for Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, and his gratitude for Madame du Deffand's prudence and tenderness in regard to her, and proving, in their opinion, that her behaviour to her protégée had been, in this instance, at least, entirely maternal. But such was not the view taken by Julie de Lespinasse herself. Instead of promising compliance with the grave admonitions of her patroness, she broke out into protest with a vehemence which dismayed the elder woman, by whom the potentialities of passion hidden beneath a surface of consummate tact and self-control had been perhaps hitherto unsuspected. Finding argument and reason unavailing, Madame du Deffand had recourse to authority, and summarily forbade the girl to see or speak to Taaffe again, enjoining her to remain henceforth in her room whenever this gentleman came to call at St Joseph. In after years Madame du Deffand told a strange story of the effects which followed upon this rigorous restriction. According to her, Julie, driven to despair by the thought of never again meeting her lover (who probably left Paris about this time), took a dose of

opium, which nearly proved fatal, and had a lasting influence upon her health.

We are not obliged to accept without reservation this statement, made after the final rupture between the two women. There is no doubt that Julie de Lespinasse did, at a later and much graver crisis of her existence, make an attempt at suicide, which was only frustrated by the intervention of Guibert. There is therefore nothing impossible in the narrative of Madame du Deffand, but we must also remember that the girl had early contracted the pernicious habit of having resource to opium as a remedy for neuralgia and sleeplessness, and M. de Ségur may be right in his conjecture that in her extreme agitation she accidentally took an overdose of the narcotic. In either case, Madame du Deffand seems to have shown much alarm, and a degree of compunction which proves that she felt herself guilty of some excessive harshness in the matter. According to La Harpe, she melted into tears at the girl's bedside, and though it may be true that Julie, "with the Roman," only said: "Too late, madame," a reconciliation did evidently ensue. Taaffe had, by this time, doubtless returned to Ireland, and, the grand stumbling-block being thus removed, all, to outward appearance, went smoothly for some time longer between the aunt and niece. But their first love for one another was never really restored, and with every year the estrangement grew, till the last remnant of affection had fallen away from both, and left them declared and irreconcilable enemies.

CHAPTER XIV

"LIKE WATER SPRINKLED ON THE PLAIN"

FROM Julie's letter to Abel de Vichy, above cited, we have seen that, so late as 1760, she had still sufficient influence with Madame du Deffand to act successfully as mediatrix between the aunt and nephew. Even in the following year, some letters written to Madame du Deffand herself, while that lady was absent at Montmorenci—the companion being for the moment too unwell to accompany her—show that, so far as outward seeming went, they continued to be on affectionate terms. In fact, it must be owned that the tone of exaggerated devotion adopted by Mademoiselle de Lespinasse leaves a slightly unpleasant impression on the mind. Intense and ardent as she undoubtedly was, she could scarcely have meant what she said when comparing the pain of separation from her patroness to *the agony of death* (!)—and I fear the expression only proves that she had learnt accurately to estimate the real value of Madame du Deffand's much-vaunted love for sincerity and plain speaking. In fact, the reflection which naturally suggests itself is that she must have decidedly enjoyed this interval of freedom. In these days of perpetual holidays for all classes of society, it is difficult to realise how rare was any respite in such lives as hers, for Madame du Deffand scarcely ever left home except to visit Montmorenci, whither, as

we have seen, Julie generally attended her. Accordingly, we find that, in spite of her indisposition, she seems to be having what in modern phrase is styled a good time. Her first letter is dated Friday evening, and that day she has spent resting in her room, and means, if not better to-morrow, to remain in bed. But when the morrow comes she goes out to dinner (or, as we should say, to luncheon), then takes a turn in the Tuileries gardens with another lady, and in the evening makes one of a supper-party given by the Comtesse de Boufflers, where, as she says, she did not eat much, but met several agreeable people and had a very pleasant evening. On the Monday, apparently, she follows Madame du Deffand to Montmorenci.

Plainly the companion had now a recognised position of her own, and that among the very pick of Parisian society. Not only so, but she enjoyed an amount of liberty which was unusual in that age and country for an unmarried woman still under thirty, and decisively proves that, despite the Taaffe episode, Madame du Deffand knew she could be trusted not to impair her employer's laboriously acquired respectability by anything approaching to a scandal in the household. When the Marquise had first taken Julie under her protection she had intended, whenever she herself should be absent from Paris, to place the girl as a pensionnaire in the interior of the convent, where such frivolities as going out to supper would have been impossible, but we see that she did not think it necessary to adhere to this precaution.

Despite the almost adulatory tone of these letters, we can discern in them some traces of the growing coldness not with Julie herself but with d'Alembert. Apparently she had been entrusted with an invitation

to him to accompany her on the Monday to Montmorenci, and Madame du Deffand seems to have been especially anxious that he should accept it.

"Don't be afraid, madame, I will not forget what you told me about Monday," writes Julie, "and I will do my best to bring M. d'Alembert along with me. I expect to see him this evening at Madame de Boufflers'."

On returning from the party aforesaid that night, or rather at one on the following morning, she has to tell a tale of failure. M. d'Alembert cannot come, because he is about to be carried off by main force on a visit to another aristocratic mansion!

"He has made me promise to tell you that he is very sorry, for he had been looking forward to Montmorenci, and would have liked to pay his respects to M. le Maréchal and Madame, and he feels it a privation to be so long without seeing you."

One would be interested to know the precise terms in which d'Alembert expressed the refusal thus rendered by his tactful friend. Did he say that when he wanted an invitation to Montmorenci he could get one without Madame du Deffand's patronage, and much preferred to go there when she was absent? Quite possibly, for two years later we find that his animosity has reached a stage at which he will scarcely give himself the trouble of concealing it. He is now (1763) in Prussia, as the guest of Frederic the Great, and save for the dietetic difficulties already referred to, seems to be enjoying himself very much. His letters read like one continued eulogium on the

great King and all his works, including even the royal performance on the flute. His enthusiasm may be partly accounted for by the consideration that Prussian postal arrangements were, rightly or wrongly, supposed to include a governmental inspection of outgoing letters from distinguished foreign residents, yet in the main it was probably genuine. Frederic, as we learn from Voltaire's experience, could make himself very agreeable for a short time, and his heart was still set upon winning the great scientist to take up his abode at Berlin. D'Alembert, however, could not be persuaded to forsake his native country for "a thousand reasons, one of which you will never be clever enough to guess." I need scarcely say that the *you* in question is Julie de Lespinasse, and the phrase just quoted seems to convey the nearest approach which his philosophic doubt had in a nine years' acquaintance permitted him to make to a declaration of love. His stay in Prussia lasted three months, from June to September, and during those three months Julie received from him twenty-three letters, sometimes of considerable length, giving full details of all the writer's experiences, including his own jokes, and the King's appreciative reception of them. To Madame du Deffand, the correspondent whom, in former days, he had delighted to honour, d'Alembert during the same period only wrote once, and that time in a tone of cold and stiff politeness. The King, he observes, has asked for her and spoken admiringly of her talent for epigram. He confides to Julie that what Frederic really said was: "Is Madame du Deffand still alive?" "You may be sure," adds d'Alembert, with a sneer, "that I will let her know of this agreeable remark. I am going to write to her by this post, if I can."

When at last he finds time some days later to write the single letter which we have mentioned, he begs that she will not give herself the trouble of answering in person. Perhaps Mademoiselle de Lespinasse will be so kind as to let him know (once in a way) how all is going on at St Joseph. Plainly the Marquise knew nothing of the correspondence between her companion and her former protégé. Certainly, she would have been offended beyond recall had she known that d'Alembert, while thus on the score of his many occupations neglecting herself, had sufficient leisure to write by every post to another. As it was, she disregarded his injunctions, and replied in her own difficult writing, thanking him warmly for his "charming letter," and alluding in really affecting terms to "the golden age" of their friendship "twenty years ago." Evidently, the blind woman was fully conscious that this friend of twenty years standing no longer felt towards her as in the past. Evidently, also, she regretted the estrangement, and would fain have removed it. But d'Alembert returned no answer to this letter. Her moving appeal, "Let us be friends again, as we once were," fell on deaf ears, and we may well believe that this was the last attempt at a reconciliation which Madame du Deffand's pride would permit her to make.

Half-a-year after d'Alembert's return from Prussia ensued the final irrevocable rupture, caused, like the smouldering hostility which preceded it, by indignation at the treatment awarded to Julie de Lespinasse. We should certainly be mistaken, however, if we were to trace the first beginning of this feeling to the source from which, with the girl herself, it probably originated —the abortive "affaire Taaffe." It is very unlikely

that d'Alembert who had more than the average obtuseness of his sex in such matters, ever even noticed the tenderness between Mademoiselle de Lespinasse and the Irishman, and had he understood the state of affairs he would probably for once have thought that Madame du Deffand was entirely in the right. What he could not fail to see was that, as the years went by, Julie, however she might strive to save the appearances, and perhaps the realities, of the old tenderness, was no longer happy with her employer. That lady, though she could not precisely be described as capricious, was more than ordinarily exacting in the demands she made on others, and every instance of failure to comply with those demands tended to produce on her part a rankling and accumulated resentment against the offender. "God does not require so much as she," wrote Julie de Lespinasse, in the bitterness of her soul. "With her a single venial sin cancels in one moment the services of many years." The girl, as we have seen, erred, if anything, on the side of over-suppleness, but she was no more a lamb nor a dove than she was a fool, and must often have failed to satisfy the exactions of her patroness, who mentally set down each item of wrongdoing to swell the black account opened perhaps at the date of their first quarrel over the captivating Mr Taaffe.

Things were made much worse than they would otherwise have been by the obvious partisanship of d'Alembert. Though he had never been more than a friend, Madame du Deffand was exceedingly jealous of his preference, and for her niece to have supplanted her in that quarter was an unpardonable sin. It was gall and wormwood to her to witness the affectionately confidential terms on which the two now stood to each

other, and she made her resentment so plainly felt that they were driven, in self-defence, to devise some means of meeting without her supervision. It is thus that we must account for, and if possible excuse, the curiously childish and not over-honourable proceeding which led to the final separation between Julie and her aunt.

D'Alembert found sympathy and support in two or three other *habitués* of the *salon*, who, while regarding Julie with feelings less warm than his, were on terms of intimacy with her, and, like him, suffered from the difficulty of enjoying unrestrictedly the charm of her conversation, for it is manifest that the pleasure once displayed by Madame du Deffand at every mark of appreciation bestowed on her niece had by degrees given place to a watchful and irritable jealousy of one who now appeared to her in the light of a successful rival. Madame du Deffand was, as we know, never visible till six p.m. During the winter which followed d'Alembert's return from Prussia, he and the sympathisers above referred to—namely, Marmontel, Turgot, and the Chevalier de Chastellux (the last a gentlemanly dabbler in literature) formed the habit of arriving at St Joseph an hour before the daily reception began, and spending the intervening time in a call upon Mademoiselle de Lespinasse.

No suspicion of impropriety attached to these reunions, which seem never to have been of a *tête-à-tête* description. The tiny bedroom in which they were held would certainly not at first sight strike an English reader as exactly the place where a lady should receive her friends of the opposite sex. But this objection would scarcely occur to French people at the present day, and would have been quite incomprehensible to

them then. The difference, in this respect, of national custom is noted by Young, who observes, with some exaggeration: "We are so unaccustomed to live in our bed-chambers that it is at first awkward to find in France that people live nowhere else." The real wrongdoing lay in the fact that the existence of this miniature *salon* was kept a secret from Madame du Deffand, in the full understanding that she would never, had she known, have permitted it. It is, indeed, difficult to understand how such a trick could have been successfully played upon a woman whose perceptions, naturally sharp, had derived additional keenness from her loss of sight; but late-rising on the part of the mistress of a household is proverbially the opportunity of her subordinates, and Julie's bedroom, which looked on the courtyard, was on the floor above that of her patroness, and doubtless out of earshot.

But it was inevitable that the day of reckoning, however deferred, should come at last, and one evening, about the middle of April, 1764, it came in good earnest. It is said that the evil secret was revealed to Madame du Deffand by a servant—through mere blundering, we must believe, for, if the whole household had not been more or less on the side of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, it is manifest that the deception could not have lasted a single day. Perhaps, as Marmontel implies, the blind woman's suspicions were aroused by observing that not only her companion but the gentlemen above enumerated, betrayed into forgetfulness by the charm of those familiar reunions, had fallen into a habit of joining the circle downstairs at a later and later hour. In any case it is certain that on the April evening in question she rose from her bed an hour earlier than was her wont, mounted the unac-

customed stairs, and stood, terrible in her wrath, on the threshold of the room which still echoed with lively words and pleasant laughter.

The scene which followed has been reconstructed in the well-known novel "Lady Rose's Daughter," with much alteration, indeed, in the circumstances, but still with a vigour and picturesqueness of detail which the mere chronicler of cold facts cannot hope to emulate. The gentlemen doubtless felt the necessity of withdrawing at once from the fray. Even d'Alembert would realise that the lady of his heart must, on this occasion, be left to fight her own battle unaided —as indeed she was entirely competent to do, Only stray fragments of the ensuing dialogue between the two women have come down to us, but they are abundantly sufficient to show that Julie de Lespinasse had not the worst of the encounter.

"So, mademoiselle, you would rob me of my friends!" cried Madame du Deffand, her nasal voice rising almost to a scream. "It is by such treason that you show your gratitude! You shall remain no longer under my roof. I have had enough of nursing a viper in my bosom!"

With equal passion the younger woman, her habitual self-control thrown all to the winds, fiercely retorted.

"Gratitude! I have long known that you detested me. You never miss an opportunity of wounding and mortifying me. I would not stay here longer if you asked me. I have friends of my own, real friends, who will treat me very differently from you!"

And so forthwith, that very night perhaps, the aunt and niece parted to meet no more. We do not know where Julie first took refuge on leaving St Joseph.

For a woman in her position there were only two alternatives consistent with decorum: a convent or the house of a friend. Most likely she chose the last, for many houses would be open to her at such a crisis. Madame de Luxembourg, or Madame de Boufflers, or the Duchesse de Châtillon, afterwards known as her most devoted friend, may quite well have been her hostess during the days immediately following the rupture with Madame du Deffand.

It seems, however, that so far this rupture was not irrevocable. Madame du Deffand had not apparently said: "Go, and see my face no more," but: "Do not come into my presence till six months [or some such period] have expired." Within three weeks of her departure, Julie, who, as her conduct towards the de Vichys has already shown, was by no means of a vindictive nature, had begun to feel qualms of repentance, and, though far from regretting the life at St Joseph, yearned for a reconciliation with her kinswoman and former benefactress. Her conscience reproached her with her own share in the quarrel. (It is astonishing how reproachful conscience can be on such occasions, when we are no longer subjected to daily association with the opposite party in the strife.) And it certainly cannot be maintained that Julie was free from blame in the matter; yet no woman who knows how often deceitfulness is, by the tyranny of parents and other protectors, absolutely forced upon girls in what is called a "sheltered" position, as the only possible price of peace, will feel inclined to throw the first stone.

She wrote an affectionate letter begging that she might be allowed to see Madame du Deffand before the prescribed term had expired. But that lady

LA DUCHESSE DE CHÂTILLON

FROM A PAINTING BY ROSALBA CARRIÈRA (?) IN THE LOUVRE

had not, on her side, found reflection conducive to repentance. On the contrary, her wrath had been increased by brooding over the wrong she had suffered. That anyone beside herself might have suffered wrong was not a consideration which at any time entered into her theory of the universe. Something, moreover, had occurred in the interval which tended still further to embitter her. On the morrow of the parting from Julie she had sent for d'Alembert, and made known her view of the situation in some such words as these: "You cannot be both her friend and mine. Choose then between us." And d'Alembert had in effect replied: "My choice was made long ago, madame. I have the honour to wish you a good day." It is incomprehensible how so clever a woman should in the circumstances have expected, as it is plain she did, any other reply, and mortification at her own blunder doubtless contributed to the rage induced by this repulse. Her answer to Julie was well calculated to crush out every lingering emotion of tenderness or regret, and to make a reconciliation henceforth impossible.

"I cannot consent to receive you so soon, mademoiselle; the conversation which I have had with you, and which has caused our separation, is still too fresh in my mind. I cannot believe that it is from any feeling of affection you wish to see me. It is impossible to love anyone by whom 'we know that we are detested, abhorred, etc.,' 'by whom we are perpetually humiliated, mortified, etc.' These are your own words, and the ideas which have been long suggested to you by those whom you call 'your true friends.' They may really be such, and I wish with

all my heart that they may obtain for you all the advantages which you expect from them, happiness, fortune, position, etc. What use could you make of me now, and of what service could I be to you? My presence could not give you pleasure, it could only serve to remind you of the early days of our acquaintance, and the years that followed them, and the only thing to be done now is to forget all that. Yet if, hereafter, you came to remember those days with pleasure, and the recollection gave rise to some remorse, some regret, I do not make it my boast to be inexorable, I am not unfeeling, I can distinguish truth from falsehood. A sincere repentance could move me, and restore the liking and tenderness which I once had for you. But meanwhile, mademoiselle, let us remain as we are, and content yourself with my good wishes for your happiness."

To farewells and good wishes thus expressed only one response was possible. Henceforth Madame du Deffand became, on the testimony of d'Alembert, the one person in the world whom Julie de Lespinasse might perhaps be said to hate. Julie de Lespinasse, on the other hand, was by no means the only person whom Madame du Deffand hated, but certainly there was no one whom she hated so much. She made no secret of her feelings on this point, and not only expressed them[1] in words of almost inconceivable coarseness and brutality, but carried them into practice by doing all in her power (happily it was very little) to injure the fortunes of her former friend.

[1] *E.g.*—Her blasphemous and scarcely translatable remark on hearing of Julie's death, "If she is in Heaven, the Holy Virgin had better look out for herself. She is quite clever enough to supplant her in the affections of God the Father."

More dignified and self-respecting was the conduct of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, who, so far as outward appearance went, gave on her part no sign of hostility, and in public never mentioned Madame du Deffand, save in terms of distant respect. Her sole revenge, a revenge enjoyed by herself alone, or at most by one or two especial friends, and never made known to its unconscious object, was to commit to writing, in the form of one of the fashionable "portraits," her real opinion of Madame du Deffand's character, grounded on ten years of intimate experience. This remarkable document, which has only of late years been discovered, is too long to be quoted in its entirety, but a few extracts will serve to show —first, how well Mademoiselle de Lespinasse could write, and secondly how the iron must have entered into her soul, to produce such concentrated bitterness of feeling.

"Her servants are the only persons towards whom Madame du Deffand shows any sense of justice. Them she does not treat altogether badly. She has another good quality closely allied with this one. She is liberal and generous, although economical, or rather because economical, for without good management there can be no true generosity. But it seems as if, in her, a good quality could not proceed from a good principle, and her generosity is not the evidence of a really noble mind. On the contrary, she is naturally base and sordid. She is only generous in so far as she is dependent on those around her. She tries to make friends of them merely because she cannot convert them into slaves, for she has often been heard to regret the abolition of slavery. . . . To

people of whom nothing is to be made, she is all hardness, without either humanity, charity or compassion. She does not so much as know what these virtues mean, and always sneers at them in others. Consistent, even to her own disadvantage, in her hatred of equality, she is always on her marrow-bones before so-called great people, especially if they are influential at Court, and often she degrades herself to no purpose whatever. She is quite astonished to find that scarcely anyone likes or trusts her, for she wildly imagines that she deserves to have friends, although possessing every quality which can tend to alienate them. Inconsiderate, tactless, selfish, jealous —there you have her character in four words. . . . When she has a contempt for people she takes little trouble to conceal it. She will shrug her shoulders when answering them. Under the impression that they cannot hear her, she will audibly discuss, with the person next her, all the points in their appearance or manner of which she is pleased to disapprove. And after all this she is amazed to find that the whole world is not at her feet, humbly awaiting her orders. She imagines that her want of consideration for others is a proof of sincerity, for sincerity is another virtue on which she prides herself. But she only displays it to those from whose resentment she has nothing to fear. True courageous sincerity is a virtue unknown to her, and when she sees it in others, she calls it impertinence."

Truly there is naught so bitter as love turned to hate.

CHAPTER XV

A NEW DEPARTURE

WE have now reached a crisis in our heroine's career at which it is plainly required by all the canons of fiction that a suitor for her hand should present himself. As this is not a novel, but a record of hard facts, I am compelled to admit that nothing of the kind occurred. We might certainly have thought that now or never was the opportunity of d'Alembert, and it does in effect appear that some such impression was current about this time in his own circle. Eventually the rumour reached Voltaire in his retreat at Ferney. "Is it true," he asks in one of his letters to Damilaville, "that Protagoras [his nickname for d'Alembert] is going to be married to Mademoiselle de Lespinasse?" But his curiosity is speedily set at rest by a letter from the person chiefly concerned, who with much irritability flatly denies the soft impeachment. "Good Lord," is his comment, "what should *I* do with a wife and children?" He is much too poor to think of such a thing, and if he *had* a little money, his choice would be a solitary life in the country. (This last statement I entirely disbelieve. He could never have existed out of Paris.) The lady with whose name his own has been unwarrantably coupled is indeed deserving of all possible respect, and might well make any husband happy, but she is worthy of a more eligible alliance than he can offer, and there is nothing between them but, etc. etc. etc.

This categorical statement seems to have convinced Voltaire, who wrote to Damilaville: "Protagoras is not married. It would be well if he were, that he might have sons like himself, and it is well if he is not, seeing that his fortune is not in accordance with his merits."

Was poverty really the obstacle which stood between d'Alembert and his beloved? His income had, of late years, materially increased. The French Government, in tardy recognition of his scientific achievements, had bestowed on him a pension of fifty pounds. The payments[1] for attendance at the meetings of his two Academies (Académie Française, and Académie des Sciences) brought in another fifty pounds, more or less. But he had certainly other sources, or at least expectations, of revenue, probably in connection with his literary undertakings, for at the time of his death, in 1783, his income amounted to something like 1000 pounds, a very respectable sum for those days. Julie, on her side, was by no means penniless. Besides the annuities already mentioned, she had received two more; one, in 1758, of about twenty-five pounds, the other, in October 1763, amounting to nearly ninety pounds; both, it is supposed, being bestowed by Government, through the intervention of the minister, Choiseul, whose friendship with Madame du Deffand is well known. The truth appears to be either that the philosopher had an excessive terror of the responsibilities of married life, or that, in his heart of hearts, he feared a refusal, divining, as he can scarcely

[1] The meetings of the Académie Française were held three times a week. Each member present received a crown (six francs), besides his share of the portion of those who absented themselves. The prudent Madame Geoffrin used to scold her protégé, Marmontel, for staying away from meetings and thus losing money.

have failed to do, that the lady's feelings towards him, however friendly, were not the same as his feelings towards her.

The problem of Julie's future was not then to be solved by marriage. Far more original was the career on which, with the aid of her numerous admirers, she now embarked. Madame du Deffand must indeed have gnashed her teeth over the too literal fulfilment of her good wishes concerning those "real friends" of whom Julie expected so much—especially as the friends aforesaid comprised nearly the whole of her own circle. Even such close allies as Hénault and Madame de Luxembourg took sides with her new-made enemy, all, without exception, being of opinion that the girl had been unfairly treated. Madame du Deffand sullenly endured this divided allegiance, and did not again resort to the extremity which had succeeded so badly in the case of d'Alembert. She seems, however, to have flashed into anger against her nephew, Abel de Vichy, who had embraced the cause of his former instructress with all the enthusiasm of an affectionate and honest-natured boy. She went, indeed, so far as to complain to the young man's father, but Gaspard, to do him justice, appears on this occasion to have sided, more or less, with his daughter.

The scheme devised by her friends for Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was briefly this: that she should take a set of rooms and there establish a *salon* for herself. It is not easy for us to realise the extraordinary originality of this project. The mere circumstance of living alone in lodgings was for a single woman of good reputation almost undreamed of. The ordinary course would have been to board in a

convent (which with Julie's present income she could have comfortably done), and from time to time to vary the monotony by paying visits to friends outside. This, for example, was the way of life adopted by Mademoiselle d'Ette, the false friend of Madame d'Épinay. For a single woman (always excepting actresses and ladies of the Ninon de Lenclos order) to become in her own person the centre of a distinguished social circle was a more extraordinary phenomenon still. Even in England or America at the present day, it would scarcely be possible without a considerable fortune. But Julie de Lespinasse was actually to be subsidised for the purposes of *salon* keeping, much as the editor of a literary paper, run at a loss, might be subsidised by a millionaire in our own time. Nothing shows more plainly the importance formerly attached to the now neglected art of conversation. In "Lady Rose's Daughter," it will be remembered that the heroine in like circumstances took, as a matter of course, to journalism, in which her influential friends procured her all kinds of introductions. Nobody ever thought of suggesting authorship to Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, well as we have seen that she could write. It was felt that she could serve her generation, and maintain her own social standing, far better by talking.

The lodgings were duly taken, the furniture being provided by Madame de Luxembourg. Hénault, Turgot, d'Ussé, and Madame de Châtillon subscribed a sum sufficient to cover the initial expenses of the new establishment, for it appears that Julie had no ready money in hand. The latest addition to her income (between eighty and ninety pounds) had only, it will

be remembered, been guaranteed to her in October of the previous year, and though on the strength of it she had probably expended the whole of the sixty or seventy pounds which she already possessed, dividends of all kinds were then so habitually in arrear that it is quite possible she had not yet received the first instalment.

But a more effectual helper than any of those above enumerated now appeared on the scene, in the person of Madame Geoffrin. That most generous and kindly of women had never yet encountered Mademoiselle de Lespinasse in the flesh, for as the mistress of a *salon*, in its way quite as distinguished as that of St Joseph, she was regarded by Madame du Deffand in the light of an enemy. She had, however, a long-standing friendship with d'Alembert, whose mother (in the circumstances a curious coincidence) had first initiated her into the charms of literary society. Knowing her almost boundless liberality and her passion for surrounding herself with interesting people, d'Alembert sought to enlist her sympathies on behalf of Julie, and with entire success. Some human satisfaction at the thought of disobliging her rival, Madame du Deffand, may in the first instance have qualified the kindly impulse which induced her to hold out a helping hand, but as soon as she had made the acquaintance of her new protégée all inferior considerations were merged in a strong and lasting affection which might justly be styled maternal.

As was usual in her case, her feelings presently found an extremely substantial form of expression. In October of that same year (1764) she laid out 20,000 francs on the purchase (at ten per cent.) of

a life annuity for Julie de Lespinasse, thus increasing her income by 2000 francs (equal to £87 of the contemporary English currency). Not only so, but she paid her in addition a yearly pension of 3000 francs (rather over £130), observing on the subject of this last benefaction a silence so inviolable that its existence was never suspected by the outer world till both women had passed away. To obtain the funds necessary for this princely munificence, Madame Geoffrin sacrificed three of her most valuable pictures.

Taken altogether, our heroine's income would thus amount to about 8500 francs (or £370[1] in English money of that day). Her lodgings, which will presently be described, were taken on a nine years' lease at a rent of 950 francs (about £41, 10s.). From contemporary documents it would appear that in the matter of repairs the landlord's responsibility was then, roughly speaking, the same as at present, and included certain sanitary precautions, into the details of which it is not advisable here to enter, though the reflections aroused by them are of a sufficiently appalling nature. A clause in the lease bound Mademoiselle de Lespinasse to pay yearly "42 livres, 10 sols" (about £1, 17s.) towards the wages of the *portier*, or in modern terms the *concierge*, who then, as now, was a prominent figure in the life of Parisian lodging-houses. By proverbial repute a surly and unsympathetic functionary (except when under the prospective influence of New Year benefactions), he pursued some sedentary trade, such as tailoring or

[1] Afterwards increased by other annuities, of which the sources are unknown; towards the end of her life she seems to have had as much as £500 a year.

MADAME GEOFFRIN

FROM THE PORTRAIT BY CHARDIN IN THE MUSÉE DE MONTPELLIER

shoemaking, in the invisible recesses of his lodge, responding in silence to the ever-recurring request for *le cordon.*

Julie's landlord was by trade a "master joiner," and her rooms occupied the second and third floors of a modest house, no longer existing, at the junction of the Rue Bellechasse and the Rue St Dominique, about a hundred yards from the abode of her former protectress. In Paris most houses, except those of the very poor, were then built round a courtyard, and accordingly we find that some of the windows of our heroine's apartment looked upon "the court," and some upon the street, the latter commanding a view on one side of the Convent of Bellechasse, which faced the beginning of the street called by its name, on the other of the magnificent *hôtel* of the de Broglie family, situated at the corner opposite to the comparatively humble structure occupied by the master joiner's tenants. The Faubourg St Germain, to which belonged the Rue St Dominique and the Rue Bellechasse, must have been a far pleasanter locality than the more crowded quarters in the neighbourhood of the Louvre, and it is not strange that Mademoiselle de Lespinasse should have elected to remain there. In this favoured district, then as now beloved by the aristocracy, the more important streets, such as the Rue St Dominique, were still formed mainly of convents and the *hôtels*, or town houses, of great nobles. Land was as yet plentiful on this side of the river, and the actual country not far off, and hence these establishments, both religious and secular, were stately buildings, provided with splendid gardens—circumstances which ensured good air and quiet in at least a comparative degree. The Rue Belle-

chasse,[1] in which the joiner's house was partly situated, was a much smaller and humbler street than the Rue St Dominique, from whence it branched off, and contained a larger proportion of dwellings adapted to persons of moderate means; and hence was naturally selected by our heroine.[2]

The rooms occupied by Mademoiselle de Lespinasse in right of the modest rent above mentioned were ten in number, five on each *étage*. On the second floor was, first, a small anteroom, used in those days as a kind of servants' hall, where the male domestic or domestics were supposed to wait in readiness for a call from the *salon*. Such being its use, we are glad to find that the furniture of the anteroom, besides "six chairs stuffed with straw" and "six walnut wood arm-chairs," included "a stove of marbled earthenware." The wicked luxuriousness of modern servants in requiring fires for their special behoof is a favourite subject for the jeremiads of eighteenth-century *laudatores temporis acti*, but evidently Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was in this matter, as in most others, of the new school. From the antechamber opened the *salon*, a room of moderate dimensions, but furnished (by the generosity, as we have seen, of the Maréchale Duchesse de Luxembourg) in the height of contemporary fashion. The walls were covered with a wainscoting of white wood relieved by gilding, with mirrors inlet. The hangings were of crimson taffetas, the arm-chairs and couches (of which we reckon about sixteen all told) were also chiefly upholstered in

[1] Julie's letters are directed to the "Rue St Dominique, opposite Bellechasse." But to avoid confusion with her former abode at St Joseph her lodgings will hereafter be spoken of as in the Rue Bellechasse.

[2] All these topographical details are taken from the "Histoire Générale de Paris."

crimson. There were several engravings from pictures then much in vogue, among which we specially notice "The Village Bride" and "The Little Girl weeping for her Dead Bird," both after Greuze. Over the mantelpiece was a clock, apparently of some value. A little marble bird upon a pedestal of gilt copper, marble busts of d'Alembert and Voltaire, and several tables, some of polished wood and some with marble tops, are also mentioned. On the same floor was the bedroom of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, containing a bed "four feet in width," provided with a canopy and curtains of crimson damask, two mattresses stuffed with wool, a bolster stuffed with feathers, and an under-mattress of flock. Adjoining it was a tiny dressing-room, but I am obliged to confess that in the very complete inventory preserved of the furniture of these two apartments, and also of the servants' bedrooms, I can find no mention of a washing jug and basin, though both the antechamber and kitchen seem to have been equipped with some property of the kind. A bath, on the other hand, "of red copper, in the shape of a sabot," was kept in a spare room on the upper floor, and from many allusions in the letters of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse we know that it was frequently, if not daily, in use by her. The fifth room on the second floor was a small bedroom for the man-servant, almost, save for the bed, unfurnished. On the floor above was the more elegant room assigned to the *femme-de-chambre*, boasting a looking-glass and a hanging wardrobe. Next to it was the kitchen (which as far as I can understand had not a stove but an open fireplace), the empty apartment, above mentioned, serving as a lumber or box-room, and two other rooms, for which at first Mademoiselle de Les-

pinasse had apparently no use, and which in the sequel she decided to sub-let.

Besides a charwoman and boy who assisted in the heavier work of the establishment, Julie kept three servants: a *femme-de-chambre* (*i.e.* a lady's maid who also discharged some of the duties of a housemaid), a footman, and a cook, who did not sleep on the premises. In her circumstances to keep a man-servant appears to modern ideas an unwarrantable piece of extravagance, but we must bear in mind that as mistress of a *salon* she was henceforth supposed to be at home to company for four hours every evening, and doubtless even during the morning must have received numerous visits and messages. The time of one servant would be almost entirely taken up in answering the door and showing callers in and out, to say nothing of errands, and etiquette demanded that all these duties should be discharged by a man. The cost, besides, was not exorbitant. By the will of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, a legacy of 702 francs (or about £30) is left to her footman, representing, we are told, the expense of his wages, food, and clothing for a year. The cook, a member of the inferior sex (for though the custom of employing male *chefs* had spread widely during the eighteenth century, it was still restricted to persons in fairly easy circumstances), is paid at the slightly higher rate of two francs a day. It will be observed that out of these allowances the servants had to provide their own food, the system of board-wages being then very usual.

To the distinguished visitors who every evening assembled in the white and crimson *salon* no refreshments were offered beyond an occasional *bonbon*.

Concerning Julie's own standard of living, we know little, but sadly conjecture that, like many solitary women in poor health, she was almost culpably indifferent on this head. She certainly apologises profusely to a male friend for asking him, on one extraordinary occasion, to share her meagre dinner.

"Rates and taxes," in their modern concrete sense of a supplement to house-rent, would not figure largely in the budget of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. For the cleansing and lighting of the streets, operations which were both most inadequately performed, all Parisian householders were required, once in twenty years, to pay down a lump sum, much, we are told, in excess of the amount really spent on the work—though this latter statement may be partly due to the taxpayer's ineradicable habit of grumbling. This imposition, however, was clearly the affair, not of the tenant, but of the landlord. But our modern "water-rate" had almost certainly its eighteenth-century equivalent in the tenant's expenses, though water-supply, as the term is now understood, there was none. No bourgeois house, says Mercier, in his "Tableau de Paris," is sufficiently provided with water. The wealthy, we may suppose, took care to have private wells within their own precincts. For those of humbler degree there was no resource save the public fountains, utterly inadequate in number, provided in each quarter, and, failing these, the water of the river! Twenty thousand water-carriers, says Mercier, each equipped with a couple of pails, were busy all day long in carrying Seine water for drinking and household purposes, their charge being from three farthings to one penny for each load. When we consider that the sweepings of the unspeakably filthy streets, though

theoretically carted away to waste places outside Paris, were through negligence often allowed to make their way into the river, we are not surprised to hear that strangers, on their first arrival in this metropolis, were generally ill from drinking Seine water. What we find more difficult of comprehension is that any of the habitual residents should have escaped death from typhoid. From such appalling reflections one turns with relief to the pleasanter task of endeavouring to compute the daily expenditure on water-carrying, at three-farthings[1] for two pails, in a household like that of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. That sabot-shaped bath, in which, when feeling out of sorts, she often remained for hours, must have accounted for many a pennyworth of water, for of course in those primitive times the only way to maintain the necessary degree of heat would be by constantly renewing the supply from that "big cauldron" which figures in the inventory of her kitchen furniture.

In endeavouring to estimate the personal expenditure of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, we must certainly allow a not inconsiderable sum yearly for coach-hire. We have seen Arthur Young's statement that walking in the streets of Paris was impossible for a well-dressed woman, and this is abundantly confirmed by other contemporary authorities, though we certainly find some exceptions to the rule. The wealthy Madame Geoffrin habitually made her shopping expeditions on foot, and we learn that this was also the case with at least one noble lady of the period, who seems, however, to have been considered rather eccentric, and on these occasions by no means dressed

[1] The lower rate is selected, as her house was not far from the Seine.

according to her station. Women of the eminently respectable, and on occasion faultlessly attired, bourgeois class, such as Madame Roland and her mother, seldom indulged in the luxury of driving, unless the distance were beyond a walk. But considering the social circle in which Mademoiselle de Lespinasse moved, and the style of dress required of her, it is scarcely likely that she can often have walked farther than, at most, the distance between her new home and the Convent of St Joseph, where she sometimes visited, not Madame du Deffand, but the Duchesse de Châtillon, who was also a dweller there. Yet her letters are a continuous record of theatre-going, party-going, and visiting. To take one example only: M. de Ségur tells us that she was in the habit of visiting Madame Geoffrin daily, and sometimes twice a day. Madame Geoffrin's house was in the Rue St Honoré, not far from the present situation of the Rue Royale. The distance from the corner of the Rue Bellechasse (across the Pont Royal, which stood where it now does) is well over a mile. The fare of even a humble *fiacre* would be not less than a shilling each way. It is very likely, however, that Madame Geoffrin sent her own carriage to take her backwards and forwards, a piece of attention frequently shown by wealthy Parisians to their poorer friends. Rousseau, indeed, with his usual graciousness, complains that this arrangement cost him more in tips to the coachman and footman than cab-hire would have done, but the kind and thoughtful Madame Geoffrin was just the person to guard against such contingencies. Beyond all doubt our heroine, in her social pilgrimages, had often the use of a carriage from other friends besides Madame Geoffrin, yet, when every possible

deduction has been made, there still remains an irreducible residuum of expenditure.

The expenses of dress[1] for a lady who, so to speak, was on view every day must also have been far from trifling. Guibert, who was *par excellence* a lady's man, and hence no contemptible judge, gives credit to Mademoiselle de Lespinasse for being in this respect an excellent manager. "Her economy," he says, "was so skillful as to be imperceptible. She was always dressed simply, but with taste. Everything she wore was fresh and well-assorted. She gave one the impression of a rich person who had voluntarily chosen simplicity." Unfortunately, her latest biographer, M. de Ségur, seems inclined to question her ability in the management of money, and more especially as applied to dress, his strictures being mainly based upon the fact that, in the inventory of her effects made after her death, we find enumerated no less than forty gowns of silk and satin. Yet it is possible that M. de Ségur (who, though one of the first living authorities on this period, is after all a man!) may have overlooked one detail known to most women—namely, that in those days silk and satin gowns practically went on for ever, and hence these forty dresses may represent the acquisitions of our heroine's twenty-two years residence in Paris: not such a high average after all. During those twenty-two years (1754-1776) there was (except in hair dressing) no very drastic change of fashion, for the reign of "simplicity" did not set in till about 1780. The

[1] Madame Suard naïvely observes that she was able to save money by wearing a *négligé* all day at home, and only dressing when she had an invitation to supper. Economy of this sort would be quite impossible in Julie's position.

normal mode was still that with which we are familiar in the pictures of Watteau and later artists: an upper skirt with long train and tight-fitting (very tight-fitting) bodice, and an under skirt or "petticoat," generally of a different colour, the whole being set out with crinoline. Under this system there seems no reason why a dress ten, or even twenty, years old should not, with a little alteration, have passed muster well enough. Such variations of fashion as did occur seem, moreover, to be reflected in the wardrobe of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse confirming our conjecture that the reason of her having many gowns was that she never parted with any.[1] Thus we find mention among her garments of the "Polonaise," a so-called *négligé* style, which, as we learn on the high authority of a pioneer fashion-paper quoted by Grimm, but unhappily not otherwise known, was in vogue in the year 1768 while the "Caraco," which preceded the polonaise, is also duly represented.

It is to be noted that each gown enumerated in the inventory above mentioned consists of a "robe" and "jupon"—*i.e.* the upper and under skirt already particularised—yet everyone familiar with eighteenth-century pictures must have observed that the upper and under skirt are there scarcely ever represented as similar. The inference would seem to be that the "robe" of one costume was generally worn with the "jupon" of another, a method which would produce, at a comparatively trifling cost, an almost bewildering impression of variety.

In estimating Julie's character as an economist,

[1] Her dresses overflowed every room in the establishment, even to the kitchen. In the matter of underlinen her possessions were on a similar scale, and included more than seventy chemises.

there is another consideration which must not be overlooked. It was then perfectly usual, and in no way discreditable, for ladies in poor circumstances to receive presents of dress from their richer friends. Thus Madame Geoffrin gives a beautiful gown to the young Madame Suard; Madame de Parabère bestows a taffetas *broché* dress on Mademoiselle Aïssé; Madame de Grammont, hearing that Mademoiselle Clairon is obliged, under the pretext of mourning, to appear always in black, at once supplies the deficiency in her wardrobe; and in all cases the attitude of the recipients is that of unqualified pleasure and gratitude. That a woman so popular with her own sex, and possessing so many wealthy female friends, as Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, could not have had such presents in abundance, if she wished, is scarcely probable. It is more likely that while, to quote Guibert, "she never asked for gifts of this sort, and often refused them," she did accept a certain number, enough perhaps to account for an appreciable proportion of the "forty silk and satin" toilettes, and the numerous garments of fur which also figure in her wardrobe.

On the whole, it seems as if she may, after all, have deserved her reputation for good management, a reputation on which she appears, as is only natural, to have prided herself more than on her unparalleled social achievements.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DESTROYER OF BEAUTY

THE new *salon* thus launched on its career had from the first an enormous vogue. Tasting the sweets of victory and freedom, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was probably happier than she had been at any former period of her life. But little more than a year after she had entered on this stage of her career a great trouble fell upon her, in the dangerous illness of the most devoted and serviceable of her adherents. D'Alembert's health, always frail, had for some time been worse than usual. His correspondence with Voltaire during the summer of 1764 tells a dire tale of his sufferings from indigestion. His friends, he says, persuaded him, much against his will, to consult a doctor, who did him more harm than good; a statement which, in view of the medical treatment then obtaining, we are cheerfully willing to accept. Wisely enough he discontinued the medicines prescribed for him, and, less wisely, resorted instead to what he called a regimen of his own[1] (*i.e.* to a further diminution of his already insufficient allowance of food), and by this he confidently hoped to obtain a complete recovery.

There were limits, however, even to the virtue of starvation, and in July of the following year, 1765, he fell ill of internal inflammation, accompanied by fever.

[1] Besides observing a narrow and highly monotonous diet he was a total abstainer—a very rare thing in those days, especially in France.

For some days his physician feared the worst. "I have had one foot in Charon's bark," he wrote himself to Voltaire, "and it seemed to me that I was not unwilling to enter it altogether." As is often the case, however, with delicate people, his grasp on life was extraordinarily strong, and in about a week he had turned the corner towards recovery. It would be alike unnecessary and ungracious to inquire how far this happy result was due to the vigorous blistering and bleeding of his medical attendant, since that gentleman, with a noteworthy exercise of common sense, atoned for all his other prescriptions by pronouncing that the narrow, crowded, filthy Rue Michel le Comte, and the stuffy bedroom over the glazier's shop, were deadly to the invalid, and authoritatively ordering him to seek a more healthy locality, as soon as he could bear removal. On hearing this, Watelet, a wealthy friend of d'Alembert's, destined hereafter to play a curious part in the history of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, at once offered the hospitality of his spacious and easily accessible *hôtel*, which was situated near the Boulevard du Temple, and hither the convalescent was transported, and soon felt all the benefits of better air and comparative quiet. He was, we are told, in high spirits, and, despite his professions to Voltaire, it is plain that life seemed to him then worth living. For this he had a stronger reason than even the relief from agonising pain, or the change to pleasant and congenial surroundings, for, in the valley of the shadow he had found unmistakable proof of the value set on his life by the one woman in the world. No fear of misrepresentation, no scruple of decorum could hinder Julie de Lespinasse from taking up her place at the bedside of her suffering friend, whom she nursed with

all the devotion of an affectionate sister. No one, says Marmontel, thought the worse of her for this —and it may be true, for the tolerance of those times, though extended to many actions by no means deserving of it, was sometimes rather fine in its disregard for conventionalities as opposed to feelings.

Full of solicitude for her patient she begged him not again to expose himself to the dangers of his insanitary lodging in the Rue Michel le Comte, with the additional hardship of a long walk every evening in all weathers; for it may easily be believed that he was at least as assiduous in his attendance on her *salon* as he had been in his visits to St Joseph, and the distance, as we have seen, was much the same in both cases. She had two rooms on her upper floor, which were really no use to her except to contain lumber, why should he not rent them of her? The money would be a help to her, and he would be in good air, and able to have her company at any moment without fatigue. People might talk (this objection would probably come from d'Alembert, who, perhaps from his wider experience, was far more concerned about the propriety of the arrangement than she). Well, let them talk! Everybody whose opinion they cared for would know that it was all right.

D'Alembert was not proof against reasoning so strongly supported by his own inclination. He was reluctant to leave his kind old nurse, but he did his best to make up for the pecuniary loss by a pension of twenty-six pounds, and for the "moral damage" by visiting her twice a week. In his letter to Voltaire of 13th August he announces the contemplated change of abode in terms which really furnish a first-rate example of the *suppressio veri*, for Julie is not once alluded to

"Do you know that I am going to be weaned? At forty-seven I cannot be said to be beginning too young! I am leaving my nurse, with whom I have been for twenty-five years [*i.e.* since leaving the Collège des Quatre Nations]. I had nothing to complain of as far as she was concerned, but I was boxed up in a hole where I could not breathe, and I feel that I must have air,[1] so I am going to move to a lodging where it can be had."

Henceforth the friends lived together, the house being shared, as d'Alembert in the supposed interests of propriety was careful to explain, by two other lodgers. For his two rooms he paid a rent of about seventeen pounds, but a large proportion of his time was certainly spent downstairs in the apartments of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. M. de Sègur is of opinion that they even had a common housekeeping fund and took their meals together, and it is in any case certain that they lived on terms of the most affectionate and confidential intimacy, and that when, towards the close of her life, Julie had thoughts of changing house, d'Alembert was to have accompanied her as a matter of course. So close an association between a man of forty-seven and a woman of thirty-two would not, of course, be possible in our days without considerable scandal. That it was possible then, and excited no disapproval in such women as Madame Geoffrin and Madame Necker, is another proof that the society of that period, notwithstanding its shameful habit of calling evil good and good evil, could sometimes recognise

[1] The fact that d'Alembert, as a baby, in comparison with his condition in the purer air of the country, flourished in this unhealthy atmosphere, is a terrible proof of the neglect from which he must have suffered before the good woman of the Rue Michel le Comte took him in hand.

real innocence in spite of unfavourable appearances. "Nothing could be more innocent than their relations," says Marmontel, "and they were respected accordingly. Even malice never attacked them, and the high estimation in which Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was held, so far from being diminished, was thereby increased." The atrabilious Jean-Jacques in substance confirms this statement, though the terms he employs and the grounds on which he bases his confidence are widely different from those just cited. On the other hand, the historian Hume, afterwards a great friend of Julie, writes, in a letter dated 22nd September 1764: "I went to see Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, d'Alembert's mistress, who is really," he adds, "one of the most sensible women of Paris." To English readers, however, this phrase (which, moreover, was written a year before the inauguration of the joint establishment) will scarcely bear the same meaning as to the French biographers of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, who are, most naturally, unaware that in 1764 the word "mistress" was far from having entirely lost its ancient and honourable signification, and in Hume's mouth probably meant "the lady with whom d'Alembert is in love."[1]

That one person, at all events, and that person d'Alembert himself, was nervously alive to the possibility of unfavourable comment, is obvious. We have already seen in how irritable a fashion he negatived the rumours of his approaching marriage, which in the spring of 1766 had elicited a friendly inquiry

[1] It is so used, *e.g.*, in "The Vicar of Wakefield," where, at a family dinner party, the excellent Moses is bantered on dreaming of his "mistress"—that is, of the irreproachable Miss Flamborough. Maria in *The School for Scandal* is called Joseph Surface's "mistress," because he is anxious to marry her. Dr Johnson always spoke of Mrs Thrale as "my mistress."

from Voltaire. After the denial quoted in a previous chapter he goes on thus :

"I am living at present in the same house with this lady, where there are two other lodgers besides ourselves, and that is the cause of this report. I have no doubt besides that it has had a helping hand from Madame du Deffand, with whom I am told you correspond, though why you do, I can't think. She knows very well that there is no marriage in the case, but she would like to make people think that there is something else. A wicked old hag[1] like her can never believe that any women are virtuous. Happily she is well known, and believed no more than she deserves."

Julie, on her side, seems to have been serenely happy and free from all misgiving.

"Torn as a child from her home," says M. de Ségur, in a passage marked by rare sympathy and insight, "hustled about from house to house, always a stranger and an alien, she believed that after all her wanderings she had reached a peaceful and sheltered haven. No less did she enjoy the new sensation of independence, the power of satisfying her tastes, and living her life as she pleased, with no one to call her to account. But most of all, after long and cruel suffering from the coldness or hostility of those with whom her lot had been cast, she experienced the deep joy of feeling herself enveloped by the warm tenderness of a faithful affection. . . . This peace, this intoxication of liberty, this infinite sweetness of being beloved, caused

[1] "Hag" is only an approximation to the original word, of which a more literal version appears unadvisable.

her at times, as she herself said, to feel 'terrified'[1] at her own happiness."

It is easy enough to understand why this way of life should have seemed more ideally perfect to the woman than to the man. Julie, we may surmise, had never considered d'Alembert in the light of a possible husband, or, properly speaking, of a lover. The men who in this sense had power to move her feelings—Mora, Guibert, the shadowy Taaffe—were all of a very different order from the distinguished mathematician. The sore and irritable sensitiveness of d'Alembert whenever the subject was referred to shows plainly, on the other hand, that he had scarcely as yet abandoned the dream of entering into a closer relation with the mistress of his heart. That, for the reasons probably which have been already suggested, he did ultimately abandon it, is certain. In the end he came to regard the existing order of things as the only one possible, and it was not till after the death of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse that he realised, with a terrible shock, how far she had been from regarding the strange tie between them as binding on her to the exclusion of all thoughts of love or marriage.

Their joint existence was, at the outset, disturbed by a trouble which had perhaps the effect of drawing them still more closely to one another.[2] In the

[1] "You told me ten years ago that you were terrified by the happiness which I had brought you," writes the heart-broken d'Alembert, in his apostrophe to her after her death, in 1776.

[2] It is with much diffidence that the writer ventures on this point to question the high authority of the Marquis de Ségur, who places the attack of small-pox *before* d'Alembert's bad illness in August 1765. But he does not seem to have observed that the (undated) letter in which Hume announces "Mademoiselle l'Espinasse is dangerously ill of the small-pox. I am glad to find that d'Alembert forgets his philosophy on that occasion," also contains an allusion to some dreadful mistake just made

autumn of 1765 Julie fell dangerously ill with small-pox, that awful scourge by which, as the Brothers Goncourt compute, one Frenchwoman in every four was then permanently disfigured. In England, at this time, its ravages were on a more moderate scale, owing, as was generally believed, to the practice of inoculation, imported from Turkey about the beginning of the century by Lady Mary Wortley Montague. Terrible, indeed, as such a prophylactic from our modern point of view appears, it is scarcely possible for a fair-minded investigator to deny that it did appreciably diminish both the mortality and the risk of disfigurement. In this matter, as in so many others, the example of England was longingly regarded by the party of progress across the Channel. In France, inoculation though not wholly unknown, was frowned upon by the clerical, the legal, and, to a great extent, the medical professions. For a time it was even prohibited by law, and at least one notable person was imprisoned for advocating it. In 1756 the Duke of Orleans threw his influence on the side of the new doctrine by sending for Tronchin, the famous Swiss physician, to inoculate his son—the

by the physician Gatti, who is in consequence much reviled and driven almost to despair (Letter to the Countess de Boufflers, in "Private Correspondence of David Hume with several distinguished Persons"). This mistake is plainly that referred to by Grimm in his letter of 15th September 1765 (Correspondence, vol. 4) as having just been discovered. Gatti had inoculated the Duchesse (not the Countess) de Boufflers two years and a half previously, and had guaranteed her as safe from small-pox. Notwithstanding this, she had, when Grimm wrote, been attacked by the dreaded malady, and Gatti was, in consequence, denounced as a charlatan.

It is also noticeable that in the letters of d'Alembert and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse to Hume in the spring and summer of 1766 her illness is spoken of as quite recent, which could hardly be the case if it dated back a twelvemonth and more ("Letters of Eminent Persons to David Hume." Ed. Burton).

future Égalité—a step which created a tremendous sensation, and caused the Duke to be regarded somewhat in the light of a Roman father. A considerable impetus was thus given to the movement in favour of inoculation, which began to have a certain vogue in fashionable circles, but was slow in spreading beyond them. It was indeed difficult to find a French doctor[1] willing or able to undertake the dreaded operation, and, according to the Duc de Lauzun, the fee exacted was twenty or thirty pounds, as against the "twelvepence a head" required, so Horace Walpole tells us, for the same purpose in England.

Yet it is probable that neither danger nor expense would have deterred Mademoiselle de Lespinasse from this doubtful species of insurance had she not believed herself already safe. In early life she had had a slight attack of some malady supposed by those in charge of her to be genuine small-pox, and in the strength of this tradition she had gone on securely exposing herself, perhaps, to dangers which she would otherwise have avoided, till a rude awakening came upon her. For some days she was dangerously ill, her sufferings being of course aggravated by the treatment then in acceptation. It is true that medical science had advanced a little since the seventeenth century, when one of the Port Royal chroniclers seriously records, as an example of heroic devotion in a certain devout lady,[2] that she did not entirely desert her fever-stricken husband, though "the physicians had unanimously forbidden the admission of any air to the sick-room." Tronchin, the Genevan doctor

[1] Tronchin and Gatti, the two best-known advocates of the practice, were both foreigners.

[2] The Duchesse de Liancourt.

already mentioned, had, much to his honour, denounced the custom obtaining in royal, and doubtless also in less distinguished, circles of keeping bedroom windows hermetically sealed during the colder months of the year, and we have seen that d'Alembert was ordered to leave his ill-ventilated room. We may therefore hope that our afflicted heroine's windows were sometimes opened—during the day. But the feverish restless nights knew certainly no such solace as a breath of pure air. Both in France and England, for the sick and the healthy alike, to sleep with open windows was regarded as a sinful tempting of Providence. Even Arthur Young, that hardy votary of the outdoor life, gravely relates that he once caught cold by doing so—on a summer night too! Anything of the nature of a cooling drink would probably be also denied as deadly poison, and bleeding was the recognised method for reducing a dangerous temperature. Yet "spite of all that her friends could do," Julie de Lespinasse recovered.

She recovered, but not as she had been before the dire disease attacked her. Her eyesight, never strong, was seriously affected; her health much weakened; worst of all, every trace of her former comeliness was lost for ever. In the eyes, indeed, of the faithful d'Alembert, who had suffered agonies of apprehension at the thought of losing her, this last change had no existence. "She is a good deal marked by the small-pox," he writes to their common friend, Hume, "but not the least in the world disfigured"—a judgment touchingly characteristic of a sex most unjustly charged with inconstancy and an excessive regard to external appearances. Which of us has not beheld, with emotions half of admiration and half of amuse-

ment, the unalterable and quite unfounded belief of many a man in the personal attractions of his wife, nay, in rarer instances, even of his sister? And which of us has ever seen a corresponding blindness in the most loyal and devoted of women?

D'Alembert's opinion was not shared by the world in general, nor by Mademoiselle de Lespinasse herself. She was fully conscious of her disfigurement, as is shown by her infrequent but pathetic allusions to the subject. But she bore it with wonderful courage, giving way neither to morbid self-consciousness nor to jealousy of more fortunate women. She had indeed no reason for either emotion, for her social influence was not in the slightest degree affected by her loss of good looks. We know, from the testimony of Guibert and of others who had never known her in her days of comparative beauty, that her charm of expression and manner were more than sufficient to compensate whatever else was wanting. In fact, the most brilliant time of her life lay all in front of her, and in the years which followed her illness she was to enjoy such popularity and admiration as fall to the lot of few women, and to receive the passionate devotion of one of the noblest men then living.

CHAPTER XVII

A WOMAN'S KINGDOM

THE winter of 1755-6 was well advanced before Mademoiselle de Lespinasse had sufficiently recovered to resume the daily routine which on first becoming her own mistress she had inaugurated, and which during the remaining ten years of her life knew little interruption and, save in unimportant details, no change. From one point of view it appears, for a woman of her ability, an unsatisfying existence enough, but from another full of interest and possibility.

Her hour of rising was certainly much earlier than when she lived with Madame du Deffand, but, in view of her weak health and acquired habits, we can scarcely suppose that she was, as a rule, what her countrymen style *matinale*. The morning was generally given to reading, writing, supervising her domestic affairs and conversing with such familiar friends as d'Alembert and Condorcet. Dinner, the first serious meal of the day (her morning coffee or chocolate would be taken in bed), was served to d'Alembert at half past-one, punctually, and probably Julie, if she had no engagement out of doors, kept him company over his frugal dyspeptic's fare. For dinner-parties the fashionable hour varied from one to four or half-past, the last named being that adopted by Madame Necker, and regarded by the older generation as a striking proof of modern degeneracy. The fashion of literary dinners, which was first

popularised by Madame Geoffrin, and strenuously opposed by her rival, Madame du Deffand, had within the last ten years spread widely, especially in the Encyclopedic circle, with which Mademoiselle de Lespinasse may henceforth be considered as identified. Best known amongst weekly fixtures of this kind were the Mondays and Wednesdays of Madame Geoffrin, the Sundays and Thursdays of Holbach, the Tuesdays of Helvétius, and the Fridays of Madame Necker. We do not hear that Julie was in the habit of attending the dinner-parties of Holbach or Helvétius, or even of Madame Necker, with whom she was on friendly terms; but she was almost invariably present at those of Madame Geoffrin, being, save the hostess, the only lady admitted to them.

Of the two weekly dinners in the Rue St Honoré, one was kept sacred, more or less, to artists, relieved by a sprinkling of amateurs. The other was reserved for men of letters, and regularly attended by a band of professional diners-out, whose names figure prominently in all the other literary sets of the day: Marmontel, Diderot, Grimm, Morellet, Chastellux, Galiani, St Lambert, Thomas, and many more. (D'Alembert can scarcely be included in this catalogue, for, though faithful to Madame Geoffrin's dinners, he seldom accepted invitations elsewhere.) These gentlemen, who were all good talkers, formed, as it were, the nucleus of the company, but there was also a variable element, including from time to time all the most interesting and distinguished men to be found in Paris, whether natives or foreigners. The discussions inaugurated at these reunions often lasted for several hours; the growing preference for dinners rather than

suppers being, in fact, based upon the presumption that a larger portion of the day was thus rendered available for conversation—a sure testimony, as Taine has remarked, to the idleness and frivolity of that period. But at Madame Geoffrin's house the canvassers of new and audacious opinions were kept within straiter bounds than when Holbach or Helvétius played the part of host.[1] The Encylopedists were favoured by her as including, on the whole, the best intellect of France in that day; but she had never laid aside her respect for order and morality and (less outspokenly) for religion, and was wont to cut short any argument which seemed to trench on dangerous ground by a rough and ready, though good-tempered, exercise of authority. This species of matriarchal rigour aroused much amusement and little bitterness in her guests; yet it doubtless served to throw still further into relief the more conciliatory methods of Julie de Lespinasse, who, as the only other woman present, and almost as the adopted daughter of the house, held a position at these gatherings scarcely inferior in importance to that of Madame Geoffrin herself.

"Her presence," says Marmontel, "contributed inexpressibly to the interest of our dinner-parties. Whether she listened or whether she talked (and no one could talk better) she was continually the object of attention. She was no coquette, but she inspired us all with the blameless desire to please her; no prude, but in conversing with her no one could venture to pass beyond the bounds of modesty and decorum."

But dinner, even when consumed in company, must

[1] On which occasions, says Carlyle, with much aptness, there were "two main elements . . . in the conversation, blasphemy and bawdry . . . with a spicing of noble sentiment."

have come to an end at last, and then the afternoon work began. This, for a woman so thoroughly the fashion as Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, included, of course, the paying of many formal calls. Custom, however, did not demand that the caller should actually enter a house save on the "At Home Day" of its mistress. In all other cases it sufficed to write one's name in the porter's book[1]—the eighteenth-century equivalent to leaving cards. There were, besides, shows of various kinds to be visited, picture galleries, private views, and those dreary exhibitions of the semi-scientific order in which Madame de Genlis absolutely revelled. When feeling in an unusually adventurous mood, Julie would even take a walk, either at the Tuileries or Palais Royal, or perchance go farther afield, to the Invalides or the Champs Elysées, both of which *promenades* then bordered closely on the open country. The shops, moreover, would surely engage some share of her attention, especially that famous establishment in the Rue St Honoré where the latest style of dress and *coiffure* was illustrated by a doll displayed to view in the window, and sent in duplicate to England, Germany, Italy, Spain, and even to the seraglio of the Turkish Sultan; for Parisian taste already reigned supreme throughout the civilised world, and fashion-papers had as yet (before 1768) no existence. The actual business of shopping, however, was, save by persons, like Madame Geoffrin, of unusual activity, largely transacted at the house of the purchaser.

[1] The porter's book being a social institution of such importance, it is rather curious that the porter at Julie's lodgings should have been unable to write. This appears from his inability to sign the receipt for payments made him on her death. His wife supplied his place on this and, perhaps, on less solemn occasions.

Everyone conversant with the literature of that period will remember the Parisian shopgirl, with her bandbox full of *chiffons* "on appro.," her bright and charming manner, her dainty cap and short neat skirt, making her morning round among customers not exclusively of her own sex. A fascinating figure she is, and it is tragic to observe that in public opinion her calling was but one step removed (if removed at all) from another not generally named. A linen-draper's or milliner's shop where the employees were of good character was rare indeed in Paris, and the owners of such were wont to take a truly national pride in the strictness of the *surveillance* by which alone so desirable a result could be obtained. In one establishment of this kind, several unhappy girls lost their lives in a fire, owing to the excessive solicitude of their mistress, who, being obliged to go out, had left them locked up as the only means of keeping them from mischief.

By five o'clock, Julie was back in her own rooms, and then followed the really important part of the day—the four hours during which she received. Only the counter-attractions of the Comédie Française or the Opera could prevail on her to abandon this, her essential duty to society; and in such cases of desertion, which, despite Grimm's sweeping assertion to the contrary, occurred with tolerable frequency, the fashionable world was duly forewarned of her absence.

To attempt a detailed enumeration of the guests who at one time or other frequented the *salon* of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse is plainly impossible, since any such catalogue would include almost all the distinguished persons, of every calling and nationality, to be found in Paris between the years 1764 and 1776.

Fine ladies, soldiers, statesmen, divines, scholars, *littérateurs*—every class was there represented. Here Turgot, the ineffectual angel of social reform, discussed his philanthropic schemes, and there, a little later, Condorcet, "the philosophic marquis," brought his ungainly personality and his wildly revolutionary ideas. There the Italian ambassador Galiani, "the pretty dwarf," gesticulated and held forth at will, now relating his long but never tedious stories, now pleading in vivacious and not too reverent fashion for the existence of a God, and anon, in his moments of reaction, sitting sad and silent in a retired corner. There David Hume, with his broad kind face and his hesitating Scots tongue, sought counsel and sympathy from "the most sensible woman in Paris." There the fascinating Comtesse de Boufflers, tearing herself for a while from the semi-royal circle where, as mistress of the Prince de Conti, she reigned supreme, poured forth her sparkling paradoxes. There the warm-hearted Duchesse de Châtillon, who worshipped Julie de Lespinasse, hung eagerly on every word that fell from the lips of her idol. There might be seen that stately Spaniard Aranda, the well-known Liberal minister, and there, for a brief space, the enigmatic figure of Lord Shelburne.

The general tone of the company was certainly more or less Encyclopedic, but no strict line of demarcation was drawn. All contemporaries are agreed that the distinguishing characteristic of this particular *salon* was its catholicity, and that this again was entirely due to the unique personality of the hostess, which enabled her to attract and combine into a homogeneous whole the most diverse and incongruous elements.

"Except for some friends of d'Alembert," says Marmontel, "her circle was formed of persons who had no previous connection with each other . . . but under her influence they harmonised like the cords of an instrument played by a master hand. . . . She seemed to know what sound each cord would give when she touched it; her insight, that is, into our minds and characters was such, that she could draw each of us into discourse with a single word. Nowhere was the conversation more animated, more brilliant, or better organised. . . . And observe that the minds which she thus swayed at her pleasure were neither weak nor light. The Condillacs and Turgots were of the number; d'Alembert in her hands was but a simple and docile child. No ordinary woman could have started discussions among men of this type and taken part in them, as she did, with a closeness of reasoning equal to theirs, and sometimes with an eloquence peculiar to herself. No ordinary woman could have varied the conversation at her will, introducing each new topic with the ease of a fairy waving her magic wand."

"Politics, religion, philosophy, story-telling, gossip, nothing," says Grimm, "was excluded from her discussions, and owing to her talents, and without apparent effort on her part, the most trivial anecdote obtained a hearing. The latest intelligence, of every sort, was always to be heard in her drawing-room. . . . She possessed in the most eminent degree the difficult and precious art of drawing out the best intelligence of others. . . . She formed a connecting link for minds the most dissimilar, and even the most antagonistic. There was no subject whatever which she could not discuss, with

apparent pleasure to herself, and real pleasure to others."

"No one," says La Harpe, "could better do the honours of her house. Everyone found his own place there, and always to his own satisfaction. She had great knowledge of the world, and that most attractive kind of politeness which seems to proceed from a personal interest in each individual."

"The general conversation," says Grimm again, "never languished. There was no hard and fast rule on this point, and you might talk apart to your neighbour now and then, as opportunity arose. But the genius of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse pervaded the whole assembly, and the charm of some invisible power seemed perpetually to combine all individual interests into the common whole which had its centre in her."

It is indeed an alluring picture which these extracts present to us, and one which may well provoke a sigh over the lost art of general conversation. Our modern system is strictly one of duologues, and under very favourable conditions—when the right people, for example, go down to dinner together—this has its own advantages. But there is little satisfaction in exchanging a few hurried and futile commonplaces with a constant succession of interlocutors, amid a deafening babble of conflicting voices; and such a "conversational" programme is, unhappily, but too common nowadays.

General conversation, however, was not always the order of the day. The proceedings were sometimes varied by another species of amusement equally characteristic of the eighteenth century, but not equally calculated to awaken the regretful enthusiasm of a

later generation. This was the terrible institution of "readings." It is our wont in these days to bewail the facility wherewith our friends and acquaintances rush into print, but such jeremiads betray a lamentable ingratitude for worse afflictions thus escaped. The claims of friendship can now, in each case, be amply satisfied by a statement that we intend to buy the special work in question, and to read it when sterner occupations shall allow us leisure for so pleasing an employment. Sometimes it is even sufficient to say that we are trying hard to get it from the library, but, owing to the great demand for it, have not hitherto succeeded. In the days when *salons* flourished no such cowardly subterfuge was possible. The authors took good care of that. The correct mode of procedure was for every man or woman who had written a play, a poem, a story, or an essay, of any sort or size, to volunteer a reading thereof at the house of some acquaintance supposed to be influential in the literary world. To an offer of this kind only one sort of response was admissible: a day must be fixed for the *lecture*, an audience as numerous as possible collected, the precious production must be listened to from beginning to end with at least an appearance of attention, and, last not least, the author must be complimented. If, on the strength of the encouragement thus received, he afterwards decided to publish, it was the bounden duty of his friends to find a sale for his work, each undertaking to dispose of a certain number of copies. Even Rousseau, who, as the event proved, stood in need of no patron, and who, like a well-known modern novelist, refused on principle to send in his books for review to the literary journals of the day,

did not disdain to enlist the services of Madame de Luxembourg, and other persons of light and leading, on behalf of "La Nouvelle Heloïse."

From the worst terrors of this system Julie de Lespinasse was comparatively secure, since the reputation of her *salon* stood so high in literary circles that only writers with something to recommend them could aspire to the advertisement conferred by appearing there. Thus, Marmontel gave her the first reading of a comic opera; La Harpe of a tragedy, and Bernardin de Saint Pierre of his "Voyage à l'Isle de France," on which last occasion[1] Julie for once allowed her sense of humour to get the better of her habitual politeness, thereby earning for herself the author's undying hatred. The *habitués* of the Rue Bellechasse would never have condescended to such a programme as that so amusingly described by Madame Roland in her account of a gathering of this kind, where a number of obscure ladies and gentlemen recited their own verses in turn and then everybody complimented everybody else! It is to be feared, on the other hand, that they never listened to any *lecture* so exhilarating as that which once took place at Holbach's Sunday circle when Petit, the indomitable Norman vicar, read aloud his epic poem, "David and Bathsheba," and stoutly maintained, against all criticising, that "*tristesse*"[2] rhymes with "*angoisse*,"[3] and that there is a distinct difference of meaning between "*occis*"[4] and "*tués*."[5]

Julie's *salon* closed theoretically at nine o'clock, but

[1] Bernardin, it is said, was boasting of the wonderful self-restraint which he had exercised in not knocking down an insulting publisher (*cf.* Dr Johnson), Mademoiselle de Lespinasse laughingly exclaimed: "What truly Roman virtue."

[2] Sadness. [3] Anguish. [4] Slain. [5] Killed.

unless she herself had, as often happened, an engagement elsewhere for the rest of the evening, her guests, or some of them, would remain as late as ten. It has already been observed that no refreshments were provided, not even the traditional cup of tea or coffee which lends a pleasant stimulus to the humblest social entertainments in this country. So Spartan an indifference to the more material aspects of hospitality would not greatly astonish us in a French hostess at the present time, but in those days of luxurious dinner and supper parties it was an exceedingly rare phenomenon, and the fact that it in no way interfered with the popularity of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse is one more proof of her transcendent social charm.

At nine o'clock, Julie, as has been said, often, like most of her guests, went out to finish the evening elsewhere. Holding so prominent a position in society she was sure to be overwhelmed with invitations to supper and to the various evening entertainments in vogue—*teas à l'Anglaise*, *cafés* (in private houses), charade parties, and so on—and it was probably seldom before the small hours of the morning that she returned home to bed, but unfortunately not always to sleep, after the arduous exertions of the day.

LE THE À L'ANGLAISE CHEZ MONSIEUR LE PRINCE DE CONTI

FROM A PAINTING BY M. B. OLLIVIER IN THE LOUVRE

(MADAME DE LUXEMBOURG, THE COMTESSE DE BOUFFLERS, THE PRINCE DE CONTI, PONT DE VEYLE AND HÉNAULT APPEAR IN THIS GROUP)

CHAPTER XVIII

FRIENDS IN COUNCIL

BENEATH the brilliant stream of social activities described in the last chapter there flowed an undercurrent of quiet domestic life, shared only with a few chosen friends, and in this more intimate phase of Julie's existence we see the best side of her character, and also of the society in which she lived. She was popular, as has been said, with her own sex, yet, if we except Madame Geoffrin, for whom she had an almost filial affection, and Madame de Châtillon, whose exuberant devotion at first rather bored her, but in the end touched her heart, we find that her closest friendships (I do not now speak of any warmer feeling) were all with men. The peculiar sweetness of such intimacies, more intellectual than is usual between woman and woman, more tender than is possible between man and man, was well understood at that day, Amongst the unmarried, at least, they are now scarcely attainable, and when they do occur, the world, with no unkind intention, encourages them by giving out that the persons concerned are engaged.

The principal friends of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse were three—Suard, Turgot, and Condorcet. The first-named, a man of fascinating personality but not wholly dependable character, seems to have been much in her confidence, and to have felt towards her an admiring and sympathetic affection, without prejudice, however, to his devotion for the charming girl

whom he had married for love; while Madame Suard, on her part, always entertained a feeling of profound gratitude to Julie for the punctuality with which, on the stroke of nine, she nightly drove him from her door lest the wife at home should feel neglected. Turgot, as will appear more at large hereafter, made her the confidante of his projects for reform, and on some minor points connected with them did not disdain to follow her advice. Condorcet was the most intimate of the three. Unlike Suard, he was, till long after Julie's death, a bachelor. Unlike Turgot, he was not obliged to spend a large part of the year away from Paris. By community of pursuits, moreover (they were both mathematicians), he was more closely drawn to Julie's housemate, d'Alembert, than was the case with either of the two preceding. The triangular friendship which united the two distinguished scientists and the fascinating "Muse of the Encyclopedia"[1] is presented to us under a peculiarly attractive aspect, and gives a pleasing impression of the period in which such relations were possible.

The Marquis de Condorcet was, as his title indicates, a nobleman born, but, much to the scandal of his illustrious relatives, he had entirely refused to adopt the aristocratic profession of arms. Like d'Alembert, he had early heard the call of science, and had left all to follow it. At the age of twenty-two he achieved distinction by an essay on that inviting subject, the Integral Calculus, and five years later (in 1770) he was elected an associate of the Academy of Sciences. Introduced by d'Alembert into the *salon* of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, he soon penetrated into the inner circle of her familiars. It was his boast that he

[1] Madame du Deffand's nickname for Mademoiselle de Lespinasse.

shared with d'Alembert the honour of acting as her secretary, for Julie's weakened eyes often refused service, and these two hard-working men made it their pride and pleasure to write letters to her dictation.

A whole train of interesting reflections is suggested by this circumstance. Here we have a woman of altogether unusual intellectual powers, who yet has left behind her no work of any account save a series of letters, which were so far from being intended for the world that she herself was most anxious entirely to suppress them. She is surrounded by men who all virtually acknowledge her as their superior, yet all of these men have done work which, to some sort of extent, has lived. The literary and journalistic labours of Suard, Marmontel, Grimm, Morellet, Diderot are still of exceeding utility to all who are interested in a most momentous period; d'Alembert and Condorcet have added their quota to the accumulated mass of scientific achievement, and while there is any virtue or any praise the name of Turgot will be remembered in connection with his noble efforts for social reform. All these men, while working hard (though not so hard as men work nowadays) in their respective lines, find time to take part in the social life which entirely absorbs the energies of the woman, and in some cases, as we have seen, to do a share of her work in addition to their own. Is it not possible that we have in this situation the true key to the world-wide and age-long supremacy of the dominant male? The masculine breadth of view, the masculine sense of humour, the masculine command of logic, the masculine absence of jealousy are none of them quite so obvious as they perhaps should be to the perceptions of an inferior

and irreverently critical sex; but the masculine faculty for getting, *tant bien que mal*, through work is equally undeniable and overpowering.

On the other hand, it must be conceded that in Julie's peculiar sphere—the *salon*—her male friends stood, in comparison with her, on the footing merely of amateurs. D'Alembert, indeed, seems always to have been present at her receptions and to have played host to her hostess, but he would himself have been the first to admit that his rôle was entirely subsidiary to hers, and that, though he had had a good deal to do in the formation of their circle, it was her influence which held it together. In literary matters, however, he asserted his superiority, as may be gathered from his numerous corrections to her infrequent essays in this line—corrections which do not always strike us as improvements. Chief amongst these *opuscula*[1] of Julie's we may notice two "additional chapters" to the "Sentimental Journey" in which Sterne's mannerisms are imitated with really considerable aptness, and which, I much fear, were duly read aloud to an admiring audience either in Madame Geoffrin's *salon* or in that of the author herself.

There were ten years between Condorcet and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, and twenty-five between him and d'Alembert, but the keenness and versatility of his mental powers annihilated, so far as the things of the intellect were concerned, all distinctions of age. In politics and religion his views harmonised, of course, with theirs, save that he was in both inclined, as his subsequent career demonstrates, to go further than either of his friends. In character he

[1] These are given at the end of her letters to Guibert, edited by M. Eugène Asse.

was, to all appearance, kind and benevolent, almost to a fault. The fiery nature of the future Girondist leader lay as yet concealed under an outward semblance of calm and rather cold philanthropy—"like a volcano," says d'Alembert, "covered with snow." Julie de Lespinasse alone seems to have divined something of the alarming possibilities involved in this enigmatical personality.

"It is too good of you, kind Condorcet," she writes, on one occasion, "to live on familiar terms with us. You differ so widely from all the other people whom I have respected and admired that I am at times tempted to believe in some mixture of the supernatural or demoniacal in your character. I repeat, demoniacal, for if kind Condorcet chose, he could be as vindictive as Pascal is in the Provincials."

The external coldness of the philosophic Marquis in no wise guaranteed him against the assaults of the tender passion. Though not an ill-living man he seems, up to the date of his marriage—a perfectly successful one—in 1787, to have been always in love with some lady or other, and never to have met with any appreciation from the object of his affection. The first of these flames of whom we have any record was the charming Mademoiselle Pancoucke, the sister of the famous bookseller, and afterwards the wife of Suard. When, long after, in the days of the Terror, Condorcet, flying for life, sought refuge under Suard's roof, and was, to all intents and purposes, driven forth by the master of the house to meet his fate, the world remembered this early rivalry, and saw in Suard's action the settlement of an old but unforgotten grievance. Next, if we are to believe the bantering references of d'Alembert and

Julie, we find Condorcet in the toils of Mademoiselle d'Ussé—sister to the Marquis d'Ussé mentioned in an earlier chapter—a lady of mature years, who in her turn had lost her heart to Condorcet's almost septuagenarian uncle, the venerable Bishop of Lisieux. To the obdurate Mademoiselle d'Ussé succeeded Madame de Meulan, a young married lady of considerable personal attractions, for whom the susceptible Marquis long entertained a profound though platonic admiration. He paid his court by the somewhat original method of translating Seneca for the lady's benefit, but Madame de Meulan remained unmoved by this exhibition of sentiment, and heartlessly rejected Condorcet's modest entreaty that she would permit herself to be adored without any hope of return. Then ensued a long interlude during which the slighted one's lovelorn and lackadaisical demeanour laid him open to the good-humoured gibes, and at times to the serious remonstrances, of his two older friends, neither of whom, we may observe, was at all in a position favourable to stone-throwing. For d'Alembert was devoting his life to a woman who never loved him as he loved her, and Julie was hereafter to break her heart for a man in every way unworthy.

The explanation of Condorcet's persistent ill-success with the opposite sex is to be found, no doubt, in his external deficiencies. His fine face was singularly lacking in animation, his bearing awkward, and his manners, though gentle and courteous, left much to be desired. His disregard for the conventionalities, indeed, was in some respects carried to an extent which, at the present day, we find difficulty in realising, as will appear in the extracts given below,

LE MARQUIS DE CONDORCET

SCHOOL OF GREUZE. IN THE MUSÉE DE VERSAILLES

from the three-cornered correspondence maintained by the friends. Under the surface tone of gay banter it is easy to detect a note of genuine and affectionate solicitude.

"My zeal for your education" (Condorcet is away in the country and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse is dictating to d'Alembert), "continues even in your absence. Above all, I advise you not to eat your lips or your nails. Nothing is more indigestible. I have heard a great doctor say so. . . . Here is another hint for your instruction. It is the suggestion of my secretary [d'Alembert], who, as you know, is a great authority on such subjects, and has been specially entrusted by Mademoiselle d'Ussé with the task of forming your manners. Don't bend your body in two every time you speak, like a priest saying his *confiteor* at the altar. If you persist in it, you will have to say your *meâ culpâ* for it some day. You learned that bad habit from Mademoiselle d'Ussé. She always makes you bend close over her so that your conversation may be more confidential. . . . I also recommend some attention to your ears, which are always in need of washing (*sic*!). . . . I send you no news. In the first place, I know none. In the second, I don't believe you care for it. In the third, it is a great bore, and, at the worst, you are sure to hear everything some time, if you only wait long enough. In the fourth place, because my secretary is in a hurry to get off to a dinner with some of his cronies, for everybody has cronies of his own."

"*July* 1769.

"To begin with, monsieur, you are wrong in not dating your letters. This is very important advice.

. . . You are wrong besides in working at geometry like a madman, bolting your supper like an ogre, and sleeping as little as a hare. You may be quite sure it is not my secretary who says this. *He* would never have written that line of Voltaire's about time:

"'Tis wasted, save when spent on Love alone!'

He would have put—

"'Tis wasted save when spent on *Algebra!*"

"PARIS, *Monday, August 7th*, 1769.
Mean time thirty-five minutes and four seconds past nine A.M.

"There, monsieur, is something like a date! You can't cavil at that. My secretary never knows what he is saying or doing (this is utter nonsense—note by the secretary), so you must not be surprised that he has mistaken July for August. (The secretary replies that he was apparently told to write August, and not July, and that he writes what he is told.) . . .

"And so you differ from Voltaire, monsieur, and think time wasted, except on geometry? . . .

"(Quite right, my dear colleague. Never mind the women and Voltaire.)"

"*October 15th*, 1771.

"My cross-grained secretary is so condescending as to write to my kind Condorcet, There are not many people for whom he will give himself the trouble. Like me, he is anxious and distressed about your bad health. You must let us know how you are, and you must tell the truth about it, and not try to spare our feelings. Is your mind calmer? Is your head more steady? Has absence (from the unappreciative Madame de Meulan) made you worse?

Are you resolved to live upon sorrow? (and folly!—note by the secretary). Would it not be better to make an effort to get well?"

In a letter written about the same time, with her own hand and without the co-operation of d'Alembert, Julie takes her friend still more roundly to task.

"It seems to me that it is your own fault if you are ill. If you had a little courage, your mind and body would be in a better condition. You are just as inexperienced now as when you left school, yet reflection ought to supply the place of experience. . . . Anything is better than the way you have been behaving for the last two months. Be honest with yourself, tell yourself that you must get over it. . . . Do not wear out your feelings and ruin your health to no purpose. Exert a little fortitude, determine to be tranquil, if you cannot be happy. All your friends are deeply grieved at the state into which you have allowed yourself to fall."

Here, in conclusion, is a later extract of more cheerful character, dictated, as the more cheerful letters always are, for when writing direct to Condorcet Mademoiselle de Lespinasse allowed herself to dwell upon her own troubles to an extent which consideration for d'Alembert did not otherwise permit.

June 25, 1774.

"I regret you every day, monsieur, and expect your return with impatience. There are days when I really cannot get on without you. For example, M. de la Harpe read aloud his *Barmécides*[1] the other day. There are very fine lines in it, and, altogether, I liked it very much, and I said, 'If M. de Condorcet were here, I

[1] A tragedy by La Harpe.

should have this pleasure over again to-morrow. He would have remembered all the best parts.' The day before yesterday he [La Harpe] read us some charming stanzas, the regrets of a forsaken lover. Well, monsieur, my secretary and I do not remember one word of them! We only know that we liked them. . . . Farewell, monsieur; the secretary sends his kind regards, and says he *has had enough of this*. The phrase, you will observe, is characteristic of him, and distinguished by his peculiar grace and charm of manner."

A talent for friendship does not always imply an equal capacity for family affection, yet that Mademoiselle de Lespinasse possessed the second no less than the first of these qualities is plainly shown by her attitude towards Abel de Vichy, the only one of her delightful kindred who can be said to have had, so far as she was concerned, either a heart or a conscience. For that other once-beloved brother, Camille d'Albon, she retained no feeling but one of mistrust and dislike. Every lingering vestige of tenderness for him had perished in that miserable interview long ago at the grate of the Lyon convent. All her references to him and his family breathe a spirit of cold and bitter hostility most unusual with her.

"It seems to me," she writes to Abel, "that you scarcely see anything of your d'Albon relations. Is it because you don't care about them? I should think that very natural."

And again:

"I could expect nothing else but ill-usage all my life from everyone who bears the name of d'Albon or has any connection with it."

Even her love for children, a strong feeling with her, seems almost in abeyance with regard to Camille's son and heir. She praises the boy's beauty indeed, but contemplates without emotion the probability of his death from lung disease.

With the de Vichys she was, despite the scenes which Champrond, in days gone by, had witnessed, on a very different footing. Her letters to Abel are full of solicitude for his mother's health and well-being. Even her terrible father receives tokens of affectionate remembrance. When Gaspard and Diane come to stay at Paris she sees them every day, and together they discuss Abel's resplendent virtues and Abel's atrocious handwriting, almost after the fashion of an orthodox family conclave. For her second pupil, Abel's scapegrace younger brother, Julie keeps a corner in her heart; she pleads for him with his righteously indignant relatives, and speaks with feeling of his death. But her full affection was given to Abel himself, and seems to have been whole-heartedly returned. M. de Ségur thinks that an increase in his tenderness for her can be traced from the day when he discovered the true nature of his relationship to her, as recorded in his diary of 23rd July 1769: "I have had a long conversation with my mother on the subject of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. It is a horrible story!" His good heart prompted him by brotherly kindness to make what amends he could for the sins of his father and mother, and his resolution was not altogether in vain.

Julie had evidently failed to inspire her pupil with her own passion for books, and her letters to him have scarcely any of the literary allusions which flow, as if insensibly, from her pen when she is writing to Con-

dorcet or Guibert. On another important point they were equally out of sympathy, for Abel was an orthodox Catholic. His sister shows her usual tact and consideration in avoiding all friction on this account. Once she falls into the mistake of putting down his name as a subscriber to the Encyclopedia, but on learning that he is not pleased at once assures him that she can easily find someone to take his place. When he is in search of a tutor for his sons she undertakes, with d'Alembert's assistance, to find him a suitable person—clerical, if required. In all the concerns of his life, great and small, her sympathy and helpfulness are inexhaustible. When he wishes to leave the army and settle down on his estates, Julie, though opposed to this measure, arranges matters so that he may suffer as little as possible on account of it in the opinion of those in authority. By active canvassing, and the exertion of her enormous personal influence, she procures him the coveted honour of the Cross of St Louis. She takes all the interest of the normal maiden aunt in every detail concerning his children, though she is not pleased that their number should be limited to two; for, like most unmarried people, she is cheerfully ready to pile on others the burdens in which she herself has no share. She strongly counsels inoculation, alleging her own case as a lamentable warning against neglecting that precaution. She gives advice as to the choice of a health resort. She executes millinery and dressmaking commissions for his wife, and rears dogs of high lineage for himself.

It is a significant proof of the horror instilled into her by her early experience of the country that she never paid a visit to Abel at his own house, and

probably died without having made the acquaintance of his children. But when her brother and his young wife came for a short time to Paris her zeal and assiduity knew no bounds. She was determined that they should have, in Transatlantic phrase, "a good time," should go everywhere and see everything. Her influence, popularity, and knowledge of the world must have made her an ideal guide in Parisian society, and all three seem to have enjoyed their time together thoroughly, though they were pretty well worn out by the end of it.

The current impression of Julie de Lespinasse, derived mainly from the "Letters to Guibert," is of a creature all fire and passion, unfitted, if not by too much goodness, yet certainly by too much brightness, for human nature's daily food. But such a belief does no justice to the manifold capabilities of her complex personality. Though she was destined to be neither wife nor mother, it is plain that the home-making instinct of the normal woman, the capacity for domestic love and loyalty, and for maternal tenderness, lay deep and strong in her nature. That she often, in secret, rebelled against the limitations of her lot there can be no doubt, and there came, at last, a time when it seemed that these, as if by magic, were about to be removed. One chance of happiness—a chance in ten thousand—was to be hers, but that gleam of hope was to shine briefly and fitfully, and to set in the darkness of utter despair and, alas! of remorse.

CHAPTER XIX

THE COMING OF LOVE

ACCORDING to Marmontel, who, for all his fine feelings and flowery language, can be spiteful enough when he pleases, Julie de Lespinasse was by no means averse to the idea of changing her condition. On the face of it, this does not seem either a very improbable or a very damaging accusation, but when Marmontel adds that she was always keenly on the lookout for an eligible husband, and that her researches in this direction failed one after another, he goes directly counter to everything we know of her character and actions. "This scheming to get herself married," says Marmontel's kinsman, Morellet, "is altogether at variance with her noble and impassioned nature," and everyone who has read her letters attentively will agree with him.

Yet Marmontel's atrocious assertion may contain the one grain of truth which lends a falsehood its worst virulence. Being human, and a woman, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse must needs have seen with some surprise, and even with some resentment, that amongst all the men who eagerly sought her company, and paid her a homage so flattering and so respectful, not one should have wished to make her his wife. From an English point of view it is indeed an amazing circumstance, since women popular in society have certainly never, in this country, been entirely without suitors. But Frenchmen, though

they claim to excel Englishmen in making love, are willing to concede that, when it comes to marrying for love, the superiority is on the other side, and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse had two heavy handicaps in the matrimonial race—illegitimacy and poverty. It must be remembered that her income, though sufficient for her own wants, was entirely in the form of life-annuities, and she could thus bring no capital into a husband's family. Mercier, commenting on the unparalleled increase of old maids in Paris (it somehow always *is* unparalleled, in every country and every age), attributes it to the fact that these ill-advised females have signed contracts for annuities—a fatal bar, he says, to the signing of contracts of marriage. And one of Mademoiselle de Launay's abortive love affairs came to an end owing to a similar proceeding on the part of the gentleman—entered upon, as she firmly believed, from malice prepense, as an excuse for breaking off his semi-engagement to her. To suitors of every degree the want of capital would present a serious difficulty, while those of good family would have to face, in addition, the less material barrier of an origin worse than obscure.

We must further consider that Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, at the period of her greatest popularity, was, according to the standard of that time, no longer a young woman, and moreover hopelessly disfigured by the small-pox. M. de Ségur quotes a significant phrase of hers, apparently meant in apology for her independent mode of life. "It does not matter what one does, when one is thirty years old, and, to use fine language, *ravaged by disease.*" It plainly shows that, whatever inward suffering such an admission may have cost her, she did not fall into

the mistake of overrating her matrimonial chances. The conventional dogmas of her day, founded, like all dogmas concerning women, on tradition rather than fact, taught that only in the heyday of youth could one of the inferior sex hope to inspire love, just as they taught that no woman was capable of being a friend to another woman. But as the records of that period abound in instances of loyal and generous friendship between woman and woman, even so they display many striking contradictions to the "youth and beauty" theory, and the most remarkable of these is furnished by Julie de Lespinasse herself.

In that same year (1764) which witnessed the rupture between Madame du Deffand and her companion there had been a change in the Spanish Embassy at Paris. The incoming ambassador was the Count de Fuentes, a nobleman of the highest rank, who, a few months after his arrival, was joined by his son and heir, the Marquis de Mora. Though but a youth of twenty, Mora had already lived through a cycle of experiences such as have fallen to the lot of few men at twice his age. When only twelve years old he had found himself an officer in the Spanish army, and—a husband. His marriage (a family arrangement designed to end a protracted lawsuit) was, as may be supposed, in the first instance only equivalent to a betrothal, but four years later, when Mora was sixteen and his poor little bride a year younger, they received the Church's supplementary benediction as man and wife. Shortly after we find them in England, to which country the Count de Fuentes was then ambassador. Here they were seen by that invaluable gossip-

monger, Horace Walpole, whose verdict on their personal appearance is not of the most favourable.

"M. de Fuentes is a halfpenny print of my Lord Huntingdon. His wife homely, but seems good-humoured and civil. The son does not degenerate from such high-born ugliness. The daughter-in-law was sick, and they say is not ugly, and has as good a set of teeth as one can have, when one has but two and those black."[1]

And on another occasion:

"No foreigners were there, but the son and daughter-in-law of M. de Fuentes. . . . Madame de Mora danced first."

The following year (1761) a daughter was born to this immature couple, but, perhaps happily, she did not long survive. Nearly three years later, the Marquis and Marchioness de Mora having then returned to Spain, a son and heir was born, but at the cost of the girl-mother's life. Left thus a widower, Mora joined his father, now in Paris, desiring perhaps to seek distraction from his grief. It is to be feared that he was not long in finding it, for the poor child to whom he had been married seems to have been a person of no account, either beyond her home or within it.

A deeper sorrow than any that could reasonably be expected of this boy-widower would scarcely have been proof against the intoxicating influences of his

[1] It is worth noting that the charming young Duchesse de Bourgogne, wife to Louis XIV.'s grandson, was in much the same case. The "strong white teeth" of previous generations seem, indeed, to have had no existence save in the dreams of reactionists, while the creations of the latter-day dentist are a consoling and palpable reality.

new environment. Everything conspired to make Paris delightful to him—his father's position, his own familiarity with the language and literature of the country (he had been trained under a French tutor), and especially his personal charm; for, despite the depreciatory remarks of Horace Walpole, he was considered, both in Spain and France, "a fine-looking fellow," tall, graceful, black-eyed, with a sweet and animated expression and the exquisite manners characteristic of his nation. He speedily became the rage in those exalted circles, both at Versailles and Paris, to which, in right of his birth, he naturally belonged, and the first year or two of his residence in the great metropolis seems to have been spent in a round of elegant frivolity, trenching on dissipation.

Yet all the time, beneath this surface levity, there lay the capacity and the desire for better things inclining him to sympathise rather with the noble army of toilers and thinkers than with the gay crowd of social butterflies. This fundamental earnestness of character had been fostered by the influence of his father-in-law, the Count d'Aranda, in whose household he had lived during the earlier years of his premature marriage. Aranda, who is best known to posterity for the part which, as minister, he played in the expulsion of the Jesuits, passed in Conservative Spain for a Liberal of the first water, and in France was highly honoured by the Encyclopedists for his devotion to the cause of progress and reform. It was only to be expected that Mora, standing in so close a relation to Aranda, and imbued with his ideas, should have much in common with the adherents of the Encyclopedia, and towards them, as towards his natural

affinities, he seems to have gravitated so soon as the first glamour of Court life had worn off.

To have relations with the Encyclopedic party meant, sooner or later, to make the acquaintance of Julie de Lespinasse, but Mora's first meeting with her dates only from December 1766, when he had already been two years in Paris. A letter of Julie's, perhaps addressed to Holbach, and quoted by M. de Ségur, describes the great event and the impression produced upon her by the charming young Spaniard. To our more sophisticated generation there is something a little repellent in the hyperbolical praises which she lavishes on the perfections—moral, intellectual and social—of this youthful paragon; yet there is no doubt that the verdict of all Mora's contemporaries was substantially in agreement with hers. The conclusion, however, is of no period or country, being no doubt as old and as universal as love itself: "Don't go and imagine that I am in love with him!"

We smile, half sadly; yet the chances are that she spoke in absolute sincerity. Almost, by eighteenth-century convention, a middle-aged woman (she had just completed her thirty-fourth year); older than her age through ill-health and the hardships of her earlier life; fresh from the terrible illness which had destroyed every claim to good looks; poor, and the child of dishonour—how could she be guilty of such madness as to cast her eyes on this fine flower of the proudest aristocracy in Europe, this idol of beautiful and high-born ladies? Madness it might well indeed have seemed to anyone, and of a kind only to be surpassed by the greater madness of expecting any return to an attachment so misplaced. Yet here it was the impossible that happened, for it was destined that Julie de

Lespinasse should be loved by this man as few women are loved by men, and indeed far better than she loved him.

In view of all the above considerations it seems probable enough that, although Mademoiselle de Lespinasse afterwards dated the beginning of her attachment to Mora from this period, she really did not yet believe herself to be in love with him, and it is still more probable that she did not contemplate the possibility of his being in love with her. Yet one would fain know with what feelings she heard (for so interesting a morsel of Parisian gossip must surely have penetrated to her) that the Marquis de Mora was just then in the thick of a family quarrel, having for its subject a second marriage of convenience projected for him by his relatives and by him strenuously resisted? Whether this opposition arose entirely, as M. de Ségur seems to think, from reluctance to abandon the liberty which he had found so sweet, or whether he had already begun to realise that in the tiny *salon* of the Rue Bellechasse was contained the one woman in the world for him, it is certain that he was successful in carrying his point. But the relations with his parents were in consequence somewhat strained, and his leave of absence (already according to modern views inordinately prolonged) had also expired, and in January 1767, a few weeks after his first meeting with Julie de Lespinasse, he returned to Spain.

Their acquaintance, when barely begun, was thus severed, under conditions which offered no great hope of its renewal. There followed an interval of nearly ten months, occupied, for Julie, with such interests as I have already attempted to describe—without, the *salon* and its ever-increasing success; within, the pleasant

company of d'Alembert and Condorcet. For Mora the period seems to have been more eventful, and to have coincided with an extraordinary development of intellect and character. Though barely twenty-three years old, he had already attained the precocious maturity inevitable with those who begin life too soon. By what we may designate the "Young Spanish" party, then much in vogue, he was enthusiastically hailed as the coming statesman, the future apostle of reform, the destined renovator of his country's greatness. Yet neither these brilliant, if chimerical, anticipations, nor the incontestable social triumphs of the present, nor even a flirtation with a widowed duchess of great beauty, who certainly cherished designs on his heart and hand, could reconcile the young Marquis to his exile from Paris. To return thither was his object and ambition, and although the death of his three-year-old son (in July 1767) caused him deep and genuine sorrow there is no evading the fact that he used it as a stepping-stone for the attainment of that desired end. The leave of absence hitherto refused (very properly, as it seems to us), by a stony-hearted Minister of War, was granted to him in the character of a bereaved father desiring to seek consolation in the bosom of his family still resident at Paris, and late in the autumn of the same year he once more joined them there.

With his arrival, a new era began both for him and for Julie de Lespinasse. Whether the recollection of her had been amongst the influences which drew him with such force to Paris is uncertain, but with the closer intimacy following on his return came a feeling such as all the facile gallantries of his precocious adolescence had been powerless to arouse in him, and

such as it is extremely difficult adequately to convey to English readers. To our colder and more reticent natures the southern warmth of passion, the ecstatic chivalry of devotion, poured out by Mora upon the lady of his heart, seem inevitably, though most unjustly, tinged with unreality, and even, to some extent, with ridicule. This last tendency is heightened by that unlucky difference—on what is commonly called the wrong side—of nearly twelve years, the only one of the barriers separating the pair which, from the point of view of romance, can be admitted to have had any validity; for birth and wealth have always been held to be trifles in comparison with true love; and even beauty, as we must all have observed, often has its existence in lovers' eyes rather than in objective reality, while health, alas! is never made of any account at all. But we must remember that Mora, owing to the peculiar circumstances of his life, was, both in his own estimation and that of others, much older than his age.

"I am young," he writes about this time to his friend, the Duke de Villa-Hermosa, "but no man, however old, has had a harder and more varied experience of the world than I. I believe that I know it [the world], and I know that I despise it."

"He had seen everything, had passed judgment on everything, even to weariness and satiety," writes Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, in reference to this same period. It was no case of a simple, inexperienced youth falling victim to the wiles of a mature woman versed in the world's wisdom. Most cogent of all is the fact that Mora, during his remaining six years of life, retained, amidst difficulties apparently all but insuperable, his devotion unaltered, and may almost be

said to have died with Julie's name on his lips. Perhaps it may, in homely phrase, be granted that he knew his own business best, and that, young as he was, his choice had been made once and for all.

To the lonely, storm-tossed woman, no less than to Mora in his premature disillusionment and world-weariness, this attachment seemed the awakening to a new life. At first, it appears, she felt an honourable reluctance to accept the devotion so freely tendered, but her lover made light of every argument against his suit. "You love me," he urged, "and where love is, nothing else is of any account." "And soon," she says, "he persuaded me" to believe him. All the latent passion of her nature awoke in response to his, and with hyperbolic fervour he declared that, in the art of loving, even the women of his own ardent south were mere children in comparison with her.

The happy dream continued for some months without interruption. Mora inhabited his father's *hôtel* in the Rue de l'Université, quite close to the Rue Bellechasse, and probably managed to appear most evenings at the receptions of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, and doubtless often to secure a private conversation by arriving before the other guests.[1] "More than once, we saw him worshipping her," says Marmontel, alluding perhaps to *tête-à-tête* interviews of this sort, inopportunely interrupted by some new arrival. But at the end of about six months Mora's leave of absence, wonderfully elastic as it was, came again to an end, and he was obliged, for a time, to return to Spain. His route was so arranged as to

[1] At four o'clock, she herself says, she was nearly always alone, and this was the time chosen by anyone desiring a private conversation.

include a visit to Voltaire[1] at Geneva—a visit chiefly remarkable for the impression made by the young Spaniard upon his host. "A young man of most unusual merit," the future inaugurator of "a new age to the Iberians," are the phrases which he employs, and he expresses a fervent hope that Mora will soon be included in the Spanish ministry. These opinions, so far from being peculiar to Voltaire, are confirmed by all who were personally acquainted with Mora, and in the absence of any more direct testimony to his abilities (for M. de Ségur has discovered that even his letters to his family have been destroyed), we are obliged to suppose that they must have had some foundation in fact.

The next twelve months seem to have been mainly employed by the Marquis (among whose merits devotion to military duty can certainly not be reckoned) in the usual efforts to obtain leave. The marriage of his sister with his especial friend, the Duke of Villa-Hermosa, was the pretext on which it was at last granted him, and the month of June (1769) found him once more in Paris, and more in love than ever.

About this time, apparently, it began to dawn upon the Count de Fuentes, that the romantic passion, which he had doubtless hitherto regarded as mere harmless *schwärmerei*, was, on the contrary, directed towards the very palpable and definite end of marriage. A more unpleasing discovery could scarcely be imagined. He was well acquainted with Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, and had a high respect for her character and abilities, but, naturally enough, he was far from regarding her in the light of an eligible daughter-in-law. Much more promising candidates

[1] The end of April 1768.

for that position—such, for example, as the young dowager above-mentioned—had not seemed to him good enough for the cherished heir to all his honours and titles. He determined to cut the matter short, but his paternal authority, backed by the representations of the whole family, was powerless to shake the young man's resolution. His parents, however, insisted that he should return to Spain on the expiration of his leave (early in 1770), and, as it would have been quite impossible for him in those circumstances to procure an extension of it, he was obliged to submit.

But if his family supposed that by this separation they could efface the image of Mora's beloved from his heart, they were very much in error. Realising that, so long as he remained in the army, he might never again be allowed to visit Paris (for in those patriarchal times an understanding to that effect could easily be entered into between the Count de Fuentes and the Minister of War), he decided at last to abandon his profession; and in the winter of 1770 he carried this decision into effect, much to the consternation of his friends, who had been predicting a brilliant future for him in that calling. (He had been made a general a few months previously.) Ill-health was the ground assigned by him for his resignation, and unfortunately this plea had more validity than was at first supposed. In January 1771, when Mora, exulting in his new-won liberty, was on the point of setting out for France, he was suddenly laid prostrate by hæmorrhage of the lungs. His recovery was slow, and as soon as he could travel the doctors insisted on his seeking a warmer climate, and it was not till August 1771, that he was able to carry out his scheme of returning to Paris.

It is easy to imagine the joy of the lovers reunited after that long interval of a year and a half passed in such cruel alternations of hope and fear. But over their joy there brooded henceforth a shadow never more to be lifted—the awful shadow of death. Consumption—a disease hereditary on one side of Mora's family—had marked him for her own, and every chance of escape was destroyed by the hideous treatment then in vogue, which consisted mainly of bleeding and starving. The ominous hæmorrhage continued to recur, at shorter and shorter intervals, and with increasing severity. M. de Ségur, with his usual insight, has observed that Mora in these circumstances was sustained by the hopefulness peculiar to consumptive patients, while his betrothed, for whom no such illusions existed, tasted at times all the anguish of despair. Everything, as she justly said, was against a happy ending. Even should Mora recover, the opposition of his family to the contemplated marriage remained implacable as ever. During the last year or two, troubles had come thick upon the Count de Fuentes. The expenses of his position as ambassador had plunged him into grave pecuniary difficulties, and his wife, long in failing health, was now threatened with the same dread malady which had assailed her son. Fuentes decided to resign his post and return to Spain, and he strenuously insisted that Mora should follow him thither. The paternal authority, stronger even now in Spain than in most European countries, was in this case reinforced by the entreaties of a death-stricken mother, and by the pronouncement of the physicians, who declared that the Parisian climate was unfavourable to Mora. He gave way, but with the firm resolution that it should be for the last time.

"I could never bring myself to go," he writes to Condorcet, "if I were not sure of a return which will fulfil all my hopes and wishes."

And, animated by his indomitable courage, even Julie de Lespinasse hoped, at times, against hope.

"Every circumstance, every event, every reason physical and moral is against me," she writes, "but he is so strong for me that he will not allow me to doubt of his return."

CHAPTER XX

A PINCHBECK HERO

WE now approach the strangest point in this strange life-history—the period of Julie's existence which, presenting as it does a psychological problem perhaps unparalleled in human experience, has long been a source of unfailing interest to certain sections of the intellectual world. It is a story no less sad than strange, for henceforth our affection and sympathy for this fascinating woman must, on her own showing, be qualified by disapproval, and for the first time in her life she is plainly not so much sinned against, as sinning. The severest censor will scarcely maintain that in her relations with the de Vichys, the d'Albons, and Madame du Deffand, the balance of blame lay on her side. But she was now to be found wanting towards two persons who had deserved nothing at her hands but good—namely, the Marquis de Mora himself, and d'Alembert. So far as abstract considerations of right and wrong are concerned, the first named of these men was beyond all comparison the more injured of the two. But, as Fate would have it, he died without learning the extent of his wrongs, while d'Alembert tasted day by day the bitterness of estrangement from the woman whom he had loved so devotedly. To him, therefore, our pity is chiefly due. And yet it is in regard to her treatment of him that Julie's conduct admits most readily of excuse, perhaps because it admits most readily of explanation.

In order to judge her fairly we must first realise, as she did, the preposterous assumption which, in d'Alembert's view, formed the basis of their peculiar friendship —namely, that while he did not find it convenient to offer her marriage himself, or perhaps feared a refusal, she was on no account to think of marrying anyone else. It can scarcely be imputed as sin to Julie that she did not admit the validity of such a claim, nor, if we consider that the desire of pleasing and the dislike of giving pain were, for good or evil, among her strongest characteristics, can we greatly blame her for carefully concealing from d'Alembert all hopes and expectations of a matrimonial description. Other causes besides contributed to enforce upon her the strictest reticence. The difficulties in the way of the projected marriage were, as has already been shown, enormous, and of a nature certain to be aggravated by publicity. Hence the whole scheme was kept a secret from all save one or two intimate friends, such as the Suards and Condorcet. So well indeed was the secret guarded that, till very lately, it was considered by biographers of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse[1] an open question whether any project of marriage existed at all. But the unwearied researches of M. de Ségur, among the archives of Mora's family and elsewhere, have now set the matter beyond doubt, thus clearing the memories of both lovers from a suspicion equally injurious and unjust.

The most incomprehensible part of the whole story is that, while many of Julie's acquaintance who did not believe in a betrothal were fully conscious that a love-affair was in progress, d'Alembert alone had no sus-

[1] It was even hinted by Marmontel that Julie tried to ensnare Mora, who disdained so unworthy an alliance.

picion of either. He was well acquainted with the young Marquis, and approved of him highly; saw him constantly in the company of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, and entirely realised that she took an unusual interest in him. But to d'Alembert the blessed word friendship accounted for everything. Men are in general curiously slow to realise the impression made by other men upon the women of their own circle, but d'Alembert certainly carried this masculine quality to an altogether unusual extent. Even so, Julie, as her after history proves, possessed in excess the opposite or feminine characteristic of susceptibility to the slightest suspicion of rivalry in love. It is hard to say which failing is responsible for most misunderstanding and misery.

D'Alembert's obtuseness was doubtless, in a way, convenient, but it is easy to understand that it must have been terribly irritating. Constantly in his company, sharing with him every detail of her daily life, yet feeling that from him of all others she must hide the agonies of alarm, the ecstasies of renewed hope, which absorbed her whole being, Julie found herself tried at times beyond the limits of endurance. Great as was her power of self-control, she was far too sensitive and highly strung to have a really even temper. In the old days, at Madame du Deffand's, one of her admirers had gently[1] reproached her with her deficiency in this respect. The independence of her present life had, no doubt, removed some of the most wearing incitements to irritability, but on the other hand her health, since the small-pox, had rarely been even tolerable. To judge from allusions in her own letters and those of her friends, she must have

[1] In verse. The writer is unknown.

suffered continually from feverish attacks, coughs, neuralgia, rheumatism, and, above all, sleeplessness. Before the world she bore up with marvellous courage, alike against these ills and the mental tortures of anxiety, now often added to them. But courage of this sort must give way sometimes in private, and when it does the person nearest at hand—in the present case, d'Alembert—is always the first to suffer.

"Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was no longer the same with d'Alembert," says Marmontel; "he had not only to endure coldness from her, but often melancholy and ill-temper. He bore it all in silence, only confiding his unhappiness to me."

Probably Marmontel was the friend who, as d'Alembert himself informs us, ventured once to reproach Julie for her unkindness, and received the reply that she reproached herself no less, but that it arose from the impossibility of explaining the cause of her irritability and depression. That she did reproach herself, and continually endeavoured, not altogether vainly, to make amends there can be no doubt. "Ah, would that I might still endure those moments of bitterness!" sighed d'Alembert, after her death; "she knew so well how to sweeten them and make me forget them!" When he was ill, or in trouble, her sympathy seems to have been as ready and helpful as ever. In the month of July 1770 (at the time when Mora, absent in Spain, was still planning his release from the service), she writes to Condorcet in terms unmistakably inspired by genuine and affectionate solicitude.

"Help me, monsieur, I appeal alike to your friendship and your goodness. Our friend M. d'Alembert is

in the most alarming condition. He is frightfully wasted, does not sleep at all, and only forces himself to eat. Worst of all, he is terribly depressed, and takes no interest in anything. The only remedy is a complete change. . . . We all want him to make an excursion to Italy, he does not altogether refuse, but he will never go so far alone, nor do I wish that he should. He needs the company of a kind and careful friend such as you. You are a companion after his own heart, you alone can rouse him from the condition which makes us all anxious."

She proceeds to suggest that he should write to d'Alembert proposing the Italian tour, as if on his own account, and adds: "You will quite understand that he must not know I have written to you." Then comes this postscript, irresistibly reminding us of Mr Micawber: "M. d'Alembert has just caught me in the act of writing, so I have frankly confessed that I was suggesting the Italian trip to you. He seems quite content with the idea, so do you arrange it all with him quickly, lest he should change his mind."

Condorcet amiably undertook what was required of him, and, although the Italian tour resolved itself into the less ambitious form of a month's visit to Voltaire at Ferney, the benefit derived by d'Alembert was considerable. In the following year, indeed, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse writes again to Condorcet: "I am afraid he may relapse into the same state as last year. That would be dreadful, for he could not go abroad again." But by refraining for a while from work he recovered his normal condition. It was in this same year (1771) that he composed the "portrait"

or character of Julie de Lespinasse alluded to in a former chapter. Admiring, and even enthusiastic, as is the tone of this composition generally, it contains one or two passages bearing on the estrangement which caused him so much distress.

"You are often inclined to be irritable and unsympathetic, but the love of pleasing is so strong with you in general, that you only show these qualities to the writer of this portrait. It is true that you prove your confidence in his friendship by allowing him to see you as you really are, but that very friendship obliges him to tell you that you thus appear at a great disadvantage."

This is sufficiently plain speaking, and it is much to Julie's credit that she never seems to have resented it. But for a specimen of downright, pathetic, hopeless misunderstanding it would be difficult to equal our next citation.

"I should like you to have the kind of faults which make people lovable—the kind, that is, which arise from passion, for those, I confess, I like. But unfortunately the failings with which I have to reproach you are not of that sort, and perhaps prove (I only hint this) that you are scarcely capable of passion."

Poor d'Alembert! He really believed that if Julie did not love him it was because the faculty for loving had somehow been left out of her nature! And that very year, perhaps at that very time, she was shutting herself up all day in her room that she might brood undisturbed over the letters which reached her twice daily from Fontainebleau; for there Mora (now back in France) was staying, as the King's guest.

From this brief retrospect, indispensable to the full understanding of one count in the indictment against Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, we return to take up the thread of the story, and in so doing touch upon the mystery surrounding the other. On the 7th of August 1772 (a Friday, as Julie afterwards, with a shudder of superstitious awe, remembered) the Marquis de Mora quitted Paris never again to return; but six weeks before that date his betrothed had encountered the man whose influence, though as yet she had no foreboding of this, was destined to be fatal not only to all her hopes of happiness, but to her self-respect and good name. From every point of view it behoves us carefully to study the character of this man, if perchance we may arrive at understanding the amazing fascination which he exercised over a woman so exceptional as Julie de Lespinasse.

Jacques Antoine Hippolyte de Guibert was born at Montauban, on the 11th of November 1743, or just eleven years later than Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. His father, a provincial noble of small means, was also a soldier of some distinction, and he himself, at the age of thirteen, began his military career by active service in the Seven Years' War. Both here, and afterwards in Corsica, he highly distinguished himself, and at twenty-five, by merit rather than favour, attained the rank of Colonel. Two years later he published his "General Essay on Tactics," a work which created an enormous—in fact, a European—sensation. Concerning the technical portions, it is sufficient to say that they have obtained the approval of two such critics as Frederic of Prussia and the Emperor Napoleon. But for the world in general the really important part of Guibert's book was the Introduction or

LE COMTE DE GUIBERT

FROM AN ENGRAVING IN THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE AFTER THE PAINTING BY LANÇON

Preliminary Discourse, wherein he by no means confined himself to strictly professional topics. It was, indeed, a fervent plea for the abolition of abuses in all departments of State administration, and though, doubtless, only formulating opinions then everywhere in the air, shows a boldness and independence which in those days of despotic authority were really remarkable, and call for our respect.

In Paris the book had an unparalleled success, enhanced, perhaps, by the circumstance that for over two years it was kept on the *Index Expurgatorius* of the French Government, and could only be read in contraband copies imported from Holland. The Encyclopedists, always in sympathy with every effort towards reform, were naturally the most enthusiastic, but the militant nobility were also highly gratified by the thought that a member of their own exclusive caste had proved himself as able a writer as any literary drudge of them all. Guibert, who was now sojourning in Paris, straightway became the idol of every *salon* throughout the length and breadth of the metropolis. Men, such men as Voltaire and the great Frederic, agreed in crediting him with genius, and were only uncertain whether it lay most in the direction of letters or of arms. Women of the highest rank gravely debated the question: "Which would be best of the three?—To be M. de Guibert's mother, sister, or mistress?"

Alas! his reputation as a leader of men and his popularity as a ladies' hero are, at the present day, equally incomprehensible. In this last capacity, especially, the writer has earnestly endeavoured to understand him, in the humble hope of thereby coming nearer to the explanation of his power over

Julie de Lespinasse. But the attempt has been a dead failure. No fascinating villain, no rugged incarnation of strength, emerges from the records which alone remain to aid us in the task of reconstruction. What we behold is a commonplace and rather fatuous egotist, with a shrewd eye to the main chance, clever enough, but wholly untouched by the divine fire of genius, good-natured enough, but incapable of disinterested devotion to any really lofty aim. Beyond a doubt, there must have been something more than this, or Guibert would never have been worshipped as he was by all the women who knew him—even those of his own household. But that *something more* has vanished past recall in the dark gulf of intervening years.

The beginning of his acquaintance with Mademoiselle de Lespinasse dates from a garden fête, held on the 21st of June 1772, at Moulin Joli, the riverside villa of the financier, Watelet, already mentioned as a friend of d'Alembert's. The impression which she made upon him may be gathered from certain passages in the glowing encomium composed by him on the night of her funeral.

"She was thirty-eight[1] years old when I first met her, and her figure was still distinguished and full of grace. She was far from beautiful, and moreover disfigured by smallpox. But her plainness had nothing repulsive about it even at the first glance, at the second you took it as a matter of course, and at the third, you had forgotten it."

Then follow the remarks on her varied charm of expression quoted in an earlier chapter.

[1] In reality, thirty-nine.

Julie, on her side, two or three days after the party at Moulin Joli, wrote to Condorcet:

"I have made M. de Guibert's acquaintance. I like him much. There is character in everything he says. He is a strong nature and quite above the ordinary."

A little later:

"M. de Guibert has been to see me. I still like him immensely."

In the light of subsequent events, these expressions are not without significance, but apart from that consideration they are in no way remarkable, for Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was prone to enthusiasms, and to the use of language which, by modern standards, must be called exaggerated. There is indeed every reason to believe that she was still wholly absorbed by anxiety concerning Mora, and regarded Guibert's company as, at most, a pleasant distraction from it. The tone of her letters to Condorcet is at this time marked by intense depression.

"I am deeply touched by your sympathy" (she writes, about a fortnight after the departure of her betrothed), "it will help to console me and to support my courage, for I confess I find that it needs much courage to live. It would need more still to die. One has ties that cause one suffering, but they are precious, and one must resign oneself to suffer. . . . M. de Mora is gone, it makes a great blank for me."

A month later:

"You are very kind, and I am very grateful to you. I have been very unhappy and am still terribly anxious. M. de Mora has left Bagnères for Bayonne

in a state which makes me fear the worst. He has his physician with him, but this is no security against a relapse, and in his present condition that might be fatal. He has been bled nine times, and was too much exhausted to realise the danger of attempting to travel. I don't know when I can have news of him. You are the kindest and most sympathetic of men, judge what I must feel."

In the following month:

"I have had news of M. de Mora. He is convalescent, but the letters take twenty days to come. It is a great effort to him, besides, to write even a line or two, and then his attacks [of hæmorrhage] are constantly recurring. My affection for him is like a sword through my heart, but it had to be. There are people for whom there is nothing but misfortune. What then must one do? Endure one's lot and look forward to death as sailors desire the port after tempest. But, kind Condorcet, you will think that I am still more unhappy than I was, and that will grieve you. On the contrary, I am much better than I have been for a long time. I can reason about my position and speak of it, and before I could only feel and suffer."

When this last letter was written Mora had arrived, by way of Bagnères and Bayonne, at his father's house in Madrid. Here, for a time, his health seemed slightly improved, but, on the other hand, he did not find home life at all conducive to mental tranquillity. The opposition of his family to the projected marriage had redoubled in violence, and, though powerless to shake his resolution, it harassed him unspeakably.

Even his correspondence was tampered with,[1] or at least such was the opinion of Julie de Lespinasse, who observed that her letters from Spain were sometimes inexplicably delayed, and sometimes lost altogether. In great distress she resorted to the assistance of d'Alembert. It seems a strange choice to make of a confidant, but d'Alembert appears to have been nearly as much concerned about the young Spaniard's health as was she herself. On Spanish mail days he regularly went to the post-office to inquire for letters from Mora, and Julie's anxiety to receive them, and her disappointment when none arrived, never struck him as in any way remarkable; in fact, he seems in his degree to have shared both emotions. Nothing can be more certain than that these letters were never given him to read, but even this did not arouse his suspicions.

In the present case, therefore, when Julie, alarmed by an unusually protracted silence on the part of Mora, implored d'Alembert to write for information to the Duke of Villa-Hermosa, the only member of the family whom she did not mistrust, he[2] at once complied, and received a most courteous answer. The Duke assured him that his brother-in-law, though still very weak, was making satisfactory progress and had recently written several letters to Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. D'Alembert replied that they had not come to hand, "and certainly it is not the fault of the post at this end, for here none are ever lost. She [Mademoiselle de Lespinasse] and other friends of M. de Mora have reason to believe that their letters to him have had the same fate." He then begs the Duke

[1] At least two fresh attempts were made at arranging a suitable alliance for him in his own rank, the lady in each case seconding to the utmost of her power the exertions of relations on both sides.

[2] 7th December 1772.

to convey to Mora a letter which he encloses. The good-natured nobleman was doubtless far from approving of the contemplated *mésalliance*, but he seems to have been shocked at the underhand methods employed by Mora's other relatives (M. de Ségur thinks that for these the Countess de Fuentes and the Duchess de Villa-Hermosa were mainly responsible), and several times he served as a medium for the safe transmission of letters between the betrothed.

Meanwhile, the Comte de Guibert had become an *habitué* of the *salon* in the Rue Bellechasse, and his friendship with Mademoiselle de Lespinasse had grown closer and more confidential. Extraordinary as it may appear, the principal bond between them, at least from the lady's point of view, was formed by the fact that each of them was in love with another person, and that in each case, though from different reasons, the path ran far from smoothly. Like many conceited men, Guibert enjoyed posing as an *homme incompris*. He had an attachment of some years' standing to a lady who did not, in his estimation, love him as he deserved to be loved, and his noble soul was, in consequence, afflicted with a profound melancholy. So, at least, he persuaded Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, who listened to him with sympathy, and, though urging him to remain faithful, could not but feel that he had been unfortunate in his choice. (The lady in question was married, but this detail never seems to have been thought worth considering by any one of the three.) It did not occur to Julie that there was a certain risk in receiving and reciprocating confidences of so delicate a nature. She was unhappy and she found relief in discussing the causes of her unhappiness with a sympathetic confidant. She did

not realise that, all through that anxious winter, Guibert was becoming more and more necessary to her. It was not until they were on the eve of a separation that she became conscious of the importance which his presence had assumed for her. It was then that she wrote him a letter of which she was hereafter to say: "I detest, I abhor the fatality which urged me to write you that first note." It forms the beginning of the famous correspondence always associated with her name, and marks her first decisive step on the downward path, from which it was never more in her power to escape.

CHAPTER XXI

THE TENTH OF FEBRUARY

GUIBERT was, entirely to his credit, distinguished from the bulk of his countrymen at that date by a passion for travelling, which extended not merely to foreign cities, but, in a wider sense, to foreign countries. Lack of means prevented him from indulging this taste to the full, but in 1773 he succeeded in achieving a four months' tour in Germany and Austria. It was his intention to visit the battlefields of the Seven Years' War, and in general to study the military organisation of Prussia—both objects so intelligent and, from a professional standpoint, so meritorious as almost to atone for the grandiloquent exaggeration with which he afterwards talked of "his journey round the world," and even for the entry in his diary on the day of departure—a choice specimen of sentimental egotism.

"May 20th, 1773.—Set out from Paris, impelled by curiosity, by my imperious desire to see and to know; yet, at the same time, still more agitated by my regrets, heart-wrung by the separation from all the objects of my affection,[1] depressed at the thought of undertaking a long journey alone, after having hoped for the company of a friend [the Chevalier d'Aguesseau]. Why then did I not stay where I was? Because temperament is all-powerful, more powerful even than inclination."

[1] A euphemistic allusion to the married lady already mentioned.

Three days before the date fixed for his departure he received that "first letter" which Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was afterwards so bitterly to regret. Some idea of the extraordinary mental condition which dictated it can be formed from the extracts given below.

"You are leaving next Tuesday" (it begins), "and as I do not know what effect your departure will have on me, or whether I shall feel free to write to you, or have the wish to do so, I should at least like to speak to you once more, and to make sure of hearing from you when you reach Strasbourg. . . . You are really very kind. I have just re-read your letter of this morning . . . but oh! I do not want your friendship; it would harass as well as comfort me, and what I need is to rest and to forget you for a time. I wish to be honest with you and with myself, and in my present state of agitation, I am really afraid of not understanding myself. Perhaps my remorse is in excess of my wrongdoing; perhaps my alarm is the very thing which would most offend the man I love. I have just this moment received a letter from him so full of confidence in my affection! . . . O Heaven! by what magic or what fatality have you come to lead me astray? Why did I not die in the month of September[1]? I should have died without regret and without self-reproach. Alas! I feel that even now I would willingly die for him. There is no sacrifice that I would not make for him, but two months ago there would have been no sacrifice in the case. I did not love more, but I loved better. But he will forgive me! I had suffered

[1] *i.e.* the month after Mora's departure.

so much! I was worn out, body and soul, by long endurance. This last persecution of stopping our letters made me sometimes feel quite out of my mind. It was then that I saw you, and then that you restored me to life. You gave me once more a feeling of pleasure. I do not know for which I was most grateful—the thing itself, or your share in it.

"But, tell me, is this the tone of friendship? Is it that of confidence? What is it that carries me away? Help me to know myself. Help me to recover some sense of proportion. My mind is distracted. Is it my remorse? Is it my fault? Is it you? Can it be your departure? What is it that harasses me? I am quite worn out. At this moment I have such confidence in you that I cast away all self-control, yet perhaps I shall never speak to you again. Good-bye; I shall see you to-morrow, and shall perhaps feel embarrassed at having written to you as I am doing to-day."

The situation revealed in this amazing letter is one into which there usually enters a traditional element of ridicule. But such is the tragic nature of the conditions that that element is here entirely lacking. The laughter which we habitually, and not unnaturally, bestow upon a lady who, after much protesting of fidelity, suddenly changes the object of her affections, is silent in the face of the spectacle here presented to us—the spectacle of a woman borne headlong, against her will, against her conscience, nay, even against her heart, by a force which she recognises with anguish as maleficent, but is yet wholly powerless to resist. We feel like the spectators at a Greek tragedy, watching the toils of Fate slowly closing around the destined

victim. We turn once more to scrutinise the man who—involuntarily, it would appear—had power to effect this thing, and, once more, we are at a loss to understand in what that power consisted. It does not seem that, at this stage of the miserable story, Guibert had made any attempt to win the affections of Julie de Lespinasse. Knowing as he did that they were already bestowed on another, and observing the devotion which she always manifested for that other, he would naturally consider any such attempt as useless. Nor does he seem to have been overjoyed by the discovery of his mistake. M. de Ségur suggests that he was almost terrified by the revelation of a passion so far exceeding in depth and power anything with which his former *affaires de cœur* had made him familiar. That any scruples of morality or honour restrained him is, in the light of his subsequent conduct, altogether unlikely, and in justice to him we must allow that such scruples in such a case would have had little weight with most men of his generation. He affected to misunderstand this terribly outspoken declaration, and replied with some soothing commonplaces concerning kindred souls and the joys of friendship. Her response shows a touching eagerness to accept a subterfuge healing to her self-respect.

"If I were young, pretty and attractive, whereas I am just the contrary, I should think there was a good deal of artifice in your behaviour to me, but, as as it is, I am full of gratitude. . . . You come to my assistance, you do not wish me to have to reproach myself, and to feel the recollection of you a wound to my self-respect. You wish me tranquilly to enjoy the friendship that you offer me with such kindness. I

accept it, it will be a dear possession to me, and a consolation above all others."

Fortified by this fragile pretext she continued, in her own phrase, to "overwhelm" Guibert with letters during his absence abroad. The feverish interest which she displays in everything concerning him, the bitterness of her disappointment when, as often happens, he is remiss in replying to her letters, and most of all her frequent uneasy allusions to Madame de Montsauge, the lady supposed for the moment to reign in Guibert's heart, show but too plainly the real nature of her feeling for him. Yet her affection for Mora, and her anxiety regarding his health, seem still unchanged, and this extraordinary dualism—continued to the end of her life—is the strangest feature of the case.

For example: "It is the postman who twice a week [*i.e.* the days of the Spanish mail] decides all the actions of my life. Yesterday he made reading an impossibility to me. I could only think of the letter which had not come." Then, almost in the same breath: "You promised to write to me from Strasbourg." And again: "Not a word from you since the 24th of May? Are you dead, or can you have already forgotten that those you have left behind have not forgotten *you*? . . . I had news yesterday [*i.e.* that Mora had relapsed] which overwhelmed me with grief. I passed the night in tears, and when I was utterly exhausted, and could feel conscious of anything but pain, I thought of you, and it seemed to me that if you had been here I would have sent you word that I was in trouble, and perhaps you would not have refused to come to me." Again: "His character is all that my heart in its fondest wish could desire, but

how his health alarms me! . . . Oh, what must you be to have turned my thoughts for so much as a moment from the most charming and most perfect of human beings?"

Of Guibert's part in the correspondence during this expedition only two letters have been preserved. Both are written from Vienna, towards the close of his absence abroad, and have been published by M. Charles Henry in his "Lettres Inédites de Mademoiselle de Lespinasse." In both these epistles he is careful still to maintain the fiction of "friendship," but at the same time shows an anxious desire to soothe and conciliate his sensitive correspondent, which process he pursues with a well-intentioned tactlessness rather astounding in a gentleman *à bonnes fortunes*.

"I found five letters of yours awaiting me here, yes five. You may be sure that I was careful both in counting and reading them. You will insist upon my confessing that I had hoped for other letters as well [an allusion to Madame de Montsauge]. Alas, yes! I did hope for others, and I found *three*! What will you say to a feeling which ought to be stronger than yours, yet always lags behind yours? Ah, no! don't tell me what you think of it, you could only pain me by doing so. After all, I have no right to complain, she does her best, she is not capable of any stronger feeling. . . . Can I expect her to be like me, or like you? . . . I love your friendship as it is . . . not because it flatters me (I cannot understand the happiness that arises from vanity[1]), but because I feel that I return it in all its fulness. That being so, why

[1] This is glorious!

did I write to you so seldom during my stay in Silesia?"

He explains that he was always too busy by day and too tired at night, and had written to nobody, and proceeds, referring to a passage in one of her letters[1]: "What an absurd catalogue you have made of all these people who take precedence of you! I swear that Madame de M. and you always are the two first objects of my thoughts, I could not say to which of you I write first. To-day, for example, it is to you. Then comes my father, then the Chevalier d'Aguesseau. Just see what favouritism I show, in placing the Chevalier, my friend from childhood, after you!"

In the next letter, which announces his imminent return, he gives her the magnanimous assurance: "I shall see you before *Her*," and immediately spoils the effect by adding: "That, no doubt, is because I come first to Paris," Madame de Montsauge being then in the country. Then, apparently realising his blunder, he tries to patch it up after this fashion: "But if *she* were on my road to Paris, and I thought that you were ill or in trouble and needed me, I would only stay a minute with her before going straight to you. Friendship, as I understand it, at least where you are concerned, has claims for me which you do not venture sufficiently to estimate."

On such crumbs of condescending consolation the proud and sensitive woman supported existence as she could. But when Guibert, late in October 1773,

[1] "How many persons are you more anxious to see again than me? I will give you the catalogue: Madame de M., the Chevalier d'Aguesseau, MM. de Broglie, Beauveau, de Rochambeau, de Pezé, etc.; Mesdames de Beauveau, de Boufflers, de Rochambeau, de Martonville, etc., and then the Chevalier, the Count de Crillon, and last of all me."

returned to Paris, having had on the whole a very successful tour—which amongst other agreeable incidents included a highly flattering reception from the great Frederic—his feeling for Mademoiselle de Lespinasse seems to have rapidly increased in intensity. Now that he was again in her company he became daily more and more conscious of her wonderful personal charm. We have his own assurance that this charm was, for him, in no way impaired by her want of good looks, and the question of age seems to have had no more weight with him than it had had with Mora. He became, in fine, avowedly her lover, but a lover of far different fashion from the man whose life was slowly ebbing away in distant Madrid. This writer has no wish to bear over-hardly upon Guibert in the futile desire of clearing at his expense the reputation of Julie de Lespinasse. It may even be, as M. de Ségur conjectures, that it was exactly the earthly element in his passion for her, as contrasted with the romantic and chivalrous devotion of his rival, which endowed him with a power so terrible and so irresistible. But at the same time it is abundantly clear that she not only struggled long before yielding to this baser form of temptation, but afterwards made continual efforts to rise above it, and that her will was in each case borne down by the man's unflinching and unscrupulous purpose. Equally manifest is the fact that, whereas she contemplated the sacrifice of her engagement with Mora, Guibert never for a moment relinquished his purpose of marrying another woman, and did not even feel bound to abandon for a time the lighter love affairs which occupied a large share of his existence.

There is nothing to be gained by dwelling upon

this period of Julie's history. To do so would, for the present biographer, be scarcely less painful than to describe in detail the dishonour of a familiar friend. Yet two points we are bound in common justice to emphasise: the first, that it is difficult to judge such a case by the standard of the present generation; the second, that Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was as far as possible from resembling the crowd of light-hearted sinners who, on every side, surrounded her, and suffered agonies of remorse such as few women of her entourage would have been capable of feeling on such a score.[1]

It was in February 1774, a date unmistakably indicated by more than one reference in her letters, that she forfeited, as she says, all right to respect herself. The inevitable Nemesis was not long in coming, but it did not assume the form of public exposure and disgrace. Nothing in the whole story is more remarkable than the entire absence of any suspicion as to the true nature of her relations with Guibert. It was not till one of the pair had been dead for thirty-three years, and the other for nineteen, that the posthumous publication of the "Letters" revealed that long-kept secret, to the intense astonishment of their few surviving contemporaries. Yet they seem to have been constantly together, passing hours alone, either in a private box at the Opera, or in Julie's rooms in the Rue Bellechasse. That no one in these circumstances should have even guessed at the truth testifies alike to the high character borne by Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, and—in the interests of justice, we

[1] She writes to Guibert: "The crime of a moment has ruined my whole life. What does it profit me that I was always virtuous before I knew you? I know that I have sinned against virtue and against myself, and I have lost all self-respect."

must add—to the honourable reticence maintained by Guibert, a reticence all the more creditable to him that it scarcely seems to have been in general among his habits.[1]

Julie's punishment was to come in more subtle fashion, through the man she had wronged in the first instance, and in the second through that other man to whom she had made a sacrifice so appalling. During the early part of that winter Mora's condition had been rather more hopeful, but in the fatal month of February the hæmorrhage, accompanied by an ominous cough, recurred with unusual violence. The alarming intelligence was communicated by Villa-Hermosa to d'Alembert, and by him to Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. He was much alarmed by the agony of terror to which it reduced her, but, as usual, failed to draw the irresistible inference. "There is no place in the world," he innocently writes to the Duke, "where M. le Marquis de Mora can be better loved than in the little corner of it which we inhabit." Alas! he was far indeed from conjecturing the twofold forces of grief and remorse which gave to the date of Mora's seizure—the night of February the 10th—a significance of unspeakable horror. For on that selfsame night that Mora received his death-blow he was betrayed by the woman he had trusted so entirely.

From this last attack he never really recovered, and to those surrounding him, and even to himself, it became clear that the end could not be far removed. Meanwhile, d'Alembert, whose solicitude is a remarkable testimony to the winning personality of Mora, had

[1] In his "Éloge," written after Julie's death, he speaks of her love for Mora in terms which leave not the slightest room for suspecting that he had himself been preferred.

for some time past been endeavouring to persuade the patient and his friends that the air of Madrid and the methods of Spanish doctors were largely responsible for the present state of things, and that the best hope lay in removal to the more temperate climate of Paris, and in the resources[1] (save the mark!) of modern medical science there attainable. In this view he was supported by Lorry, a celebrated Parisian doctor, who had been called in to Mora during his residence in France. The Marquis had at first given little heed to their persuasions, probably because he felt himself unequal to so long a journey, but now, despite his increased weakness, he suddenly decided on attempting the transfer to Paris. The real motive for this change of plans remained a mystery to the world at large, but was only too well understood by Julie de Lespinasse. Although far from realising the actual state of the case, he had become conscious of an undefined something in her letters which had not been there before; some failing in the spontaneous fervour which had been wont to respond so entirely to his own; some hint of regret and self-reproach sufficient to alarm the sensitive instincts of a lover. Yet it seems that no thought of investigation, far less of vengeance, had any share in dictating his return. Suffering and separation, he thought, had deadened her feeling for him, but his presence and the warmth of his unabated affection would give it new life. And, what is more strange, Julie appears to have desired his return as much as he. This was partly due to her sincere conviction that the best chance for his life lay

[1] In justice to d'Alembert's intelligence it must be admitted that he ranks excessive bleeding, practised it appears in Spain to a worse degree than in France, among the causes of Mora's weakness.

in removal from Madrid; but besides this she had evidently some confused feeling that such love as his might extend to the forgiving of her great offence, and save her, even now, from herself and Guibert.

On the 3rd of May 1774, Mora "tore himself," in Julie's own words, "from his family and friends," and set out from Madrid accompanied by his Spanish physician—an escort of very doubtful utility. He travelled by easy stages, and at first bore the fatigue better than might have been anticipated, but when he had been a week on his way the fatal hæmorrhage appeared once more. In his weakened condition there seemed scarcely a possibility of his surviving this last attack, and Julie, who had doubtless received the news from his doctor or one of his servants, writes to Guibert in terms which best express the amazing dualism of feeling already referred to.

"Never till now have I truly known despair. I feel a degree of terror which deprives me of all reason. I wait for Wednesday's[1] news. . . . It is beyond my strength to realise that he whom I love, he who loved me, will perhaps never again hear me call upon him, will never again come to my help. The thought of me must have made death terrible to him; on the 10th he wrote to me 'I feel in myself the power to make you forget all that you have suffered for my sake,' and that same day he was laid low by this fatal attack."

Meanwhile, Mora, tenacious of his purpose, had succeeded in dragging himself as far as Bordeaux, where he arrived, "almost dead," on the 23rd of May. Here, four days later, he passed away,

[1] Mail day.

having received the last sacraments of that Church with which, in his lifetime, he had been so little in sympathy. On his dying bed he gathered sufficient strength to write once more in these words to the woman whom he had loved with such devotion:

"I was about to have seen you once more, and now I must die. What a fearful stroke of Fate! But you once loved me, and the thought of you is still sweet to me. It is for your sake that I am dying."

Thus passes from the life of Julie de Lespinasse the one man who, as it seemed, might have made that life a perfect whole. To us, indeed, he is, of necessity, scarcely more than a shadow, yet through the universal testimony of his contemporaries, and the little which we know of his own actions, we vaguely divine that here was one who had in him the possibilities of a great nature.

CHAPTER XXII

FOR ONE, DESPAIR; FOR MANY, HOPE

THE news of Mora's death was six days in reaching Paris. Of its immediate effect upon Julie de Lespinasse we can only judge by scattered references in letters of a later date. That in the first anguish of despair she resolved on taking her own life is certain, and will be surprising to no one familiar with her passionate and impulsive nature. That Guibert alone suspected her purpose, and succeeded in dissuading her from it, is rendered equally certain by the incessant reproaches which, on this very score, she afterwards heaped upon him. The sight of her agony evidently inspired him with genuine pity, and perhaps with some degree of remorse, and in his efforts to reconcile her to life he showed a tenderness which she was unable to resist. The thought may even, in spite of herself, have crossed her mind, that the barrier between them was now removed. Perhaps she refers to the half-conscious hope thus suggested in these words, written after she had come to a better understanding as to the nature of Guibert's feeling towards her:

"I dared to think you might love me as I loved you. You must have thought me mad to imagine such a thing. I to expect constancy from a man of your age endowed with every quality that can recommend him to all the most charming of women!"

Yet if she sometimes for a moment ventured to entertain any thought of consolation, it was presently swept away in the torrents of self-reproach which overflowed her whole being. Not only had she been false to Mora, but she was, in her own estimation, responsible for his death. She forgot that the fatal journey had been undertaken with the highest medical sanction, and that, in any case, it could only slightly have hastened the inevitable conclusion. By this last consideration, Guibert, who took Bordeaux on the way to his father's house at Montauban that summer, and at Julie's request made special inquiries into the details of Mora's death, vainly endeavoured to reassure her.

"Why will you make bad worse," he writes to her, "by imagining that you had any share in his death? He had carried the cause of it within him for two years, and twice, when in Spain, only just escaped with his life. He was dying when he set out on his journey. The consul at Bordeaux told me that the doctor had declared he would have died all the same anywhere."

Reasonable as was this line of argument, it could not prevail against the thought that Mora's anxiety on her account (though "he knew not how low I had fallen") had been the determining cause of his journey, and that this anxiety had embittered his last moments. The sympathy of such friends as Suard and Condorcet, who had known, or guessed at, her relations with the deceased, brought her no comfort, because she felt herself unworthy of it, and in the case of d'Alembert, who was genuinely afflicted on his own account, she must have experienced the double sting of a double deception. Even when the Count de Fuentes, ig-

noring, with the courtesy and good feeling of a true Spaniard, the bitter family dissensions of which she had been the cause, wrote to thank her in most moving terms for all her kindness to his beloved son, he only suggested the reflection: "Unhappy man, he does not know that the death of his son is perhaps due to me."

It must be owned that her letters, filled as they were with self-reproach and regret, cannot have been particularly agreeable reading to a man so happily occupied with himself and his own merits as Guibert. He had, besides, other things to endure, as a set-off to the gratification of being beloved by the most remarkable woman in Paris, and preferred to the man in whom many had divined the future ruler of Spain. Julie, so tactful, so conciliatory, and so generous in her dealings with the world at large, was with him all exaction, irritability, and jealousy. She might perhaps have forgiven him his pleasing habit of losing or damaging borrowed books (though d'Alembert, she warns him, is less lenient on this score), but the negligence[1] with which he carried her letters loose in his pocket, or left them lying about for anyone who chose to read, exasperated her beyond all bearing. More serious still was the light-hearted fashion in which he forgot or broke through appointments according to his own convenience. But all these things were as nothing compared with the discovery that he had not really broken, as he had assured her he

[1] It has been pointed out to the writer that this does not seem to tally with what was previously said of Guibert's discretion. The remark is perfectly just, but it is none the less certain that Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, in almost every letter, upbraids him with negligence of the kind specified in the text. It is certainly almost impossible to understand how the secret could, under such conditions, have been so well kept.

had done, with Madame de Montsauge. Their correspondence is a continuous record of quarrelling and reconciliation, and we scarcely know over which to marvel most—the terrible fascination which, despite all disillusionment, still keeps its baleful hold upon Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, or the astounding tactlessness of Guibert, who never seems to have the faintest apprehension of what will be the wrong thing to say, and, having said it, is always much aggrieved at the effect thereby produced. The following extracts from a letter[1] written during that absence at his father's house above alluded to will give some idea of what, in the gallant Colonel's estimation, was a nice way of stating unpleasant facts, and at the same time will throw light on one of his better qualities, his capacity for family affection.

"When I was at Bordeaux, I saw my little niece. my poor sister's daughter. I am very anxious about the child's future. She is at present in the care of an aunt, who will look after her as long as she can, but she is growing old, and her husband is older still. If he dies she will have no money for herself, and the poor little girl would then be badly off indeed! There would be nothing for it but a convent.

"That is not all. The little girl has a brother nearly twelve years old. He is being miserably taught, as is always the case in the provinces. I should like to give him a better education, and then put him in the army, but I cannot afford it. . . . Then, when I arrived at home, I found my father threatened with a blow which would mean his ruin" (the resumption of his fief by the King). ". . . Add to this, that I have

[1] 9th September 1774. From the edition of the Comte de Villeneuve-Guibert.

a mother and two sisters . . . that I have a few debts. of no great amount certainly, but still important for anyone who is not rich, that living in Paris increases them insensibly every year, and that I do not want to live anywhere else. . . . Consider all these points and you will not be surprised that I am out of spirits. The future is full of difficulties and perhaps the only way to pay off my debts and be able to help my family will be to marry. My father has had some pretty good offers made him on my behalf in this part of the world. I have refused them, for I would rather kill myself than live in the provinces. I cannot find a single congenial companion there. You and your circle, but especially you yourself, have spoiled me for a country life. . . .

"There is only one person[1] besides yourself who keeps me bound to Paris. Is it right that you should reproach me because I cannot entirely detach myself from a woman whom I have once loved? Is not the case just the same with you, and do you not find room in your heart for another[2] beside me?"

Julie's reply to this remarkable letter is a marvel of dignity and self-control. After assuring him that she will use her influence to prevent the resumption of his father's land (a promise which she effectually redeemed) she continues:

"I do not oppose your plans for the future. For me, the future has no existence, so you may imagine that I cannot have much of an opinion as to that of other people. Speaking generally, I should say that you would be wiser not to marry in the provinces.

[1] Madame de Montsauge.
[2] An allusion to his dead rival, Mora.

. . . Paris is the best place in the world for poor people to live in. Only bores and fools need have money there. . . . What you say of your nephew and niece is most interesting and does you honour, but shows your old habit of worrying yourself about the future. For the present, the children are all right. . . . Why should not the girl be happy in a convent, especially if no pressure is put upon her in the matter? As for the little boy, there will be much less difficulty about a career for him. You know better than I do that the teaching at a provincial school is just as good, or just as bad, as at a school in Paris, and it will make no difference at all as to his getting into the army."

Three weeks later, she thus recurs to the subject of his matrimonial projects:

"You will never guess the occupation to which I am devoting myself at present. I want to find a wife for *one of my friends*. I have an idea which I hope may be successful. The Archbishop of Toulouse [Loménie de Brienne] can be of great service to us in arranging the matter. It is a young girl of sixteen, who has only a mother and no father; she has a brother. She will have 560 pounds a year on her marriage, and will have a home with her mother for a long time, because the brother is only a child. This girl cannot have less than 26,000 pounds (ultimately), and may have more. Would this be to your liking? If it is, we will set to work, and there is no fear of a rebuff, for the Archbishop is as tactful as he is polite. We will talk it all over, and if this does not succeed, I know a man who would be very glad to have you for his son-in-law, but his daughter

is not more than eleven. She is an only child, and will be very rich."

Guibert, in his reply, makes no direct allusion to these rather startling suggestions, neither of which, it may be observed, was eventually carried into practice. He merely comments on the injustice of Fate, as exemplified in the case of a friend who, though in no special need of money, had just annexed a wealthy heiress, and goes on in these words:

"And I must marry too! I must. There is no help for it! The Count de Crillon [the friend in question] had 650 pounds a year, and I have only half that. He was steady, and I am in debt. . . . My father has a marriage in view for me. . . . I will tell you all about it (when we meet, understood), you will advise and help me. If I am forced to marry, I should prefer you to choose for me."

When we read this extraordinary interchange of ideas we are, for a moment, driven to the conclusion that Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was at last on the way to be cured of her infatuation, that she had realised the man's essential paltriness, and, with the patient scorn of a higher nature, had turned her attention to serving him in the only way which he was capable of appreciating. Some such thought was certainly half present to her consciousness. Her letters about this time are filled to overflowing with the expression of her remorse for having been false to a better man (as she not obscurely implies) than her correspondent, and of her conviction that for her all possibility of happiness vanished on the day when Mora breathed out his life in the inn at Bordeaux,

But with Guibert's return to Paris the old "magic," the old "intoxication" (both words are hers), re-asserted their power. The question of marriage was, for the time being, shelved (probably even Guibert did not find it an easy subject for verbal discussion), and things went on much as before—unhappily, that is, but without any definite rupture.

But, meanwhile, events had occurred which were destined strangely to affect the fortunes of France, and Julie de Lespinasse was too near the heart of things to be insensible, even in her utmost private sorrow, to the momentous changes taking place around her. On the 10th of May 1774, two or three weeks before the day of Mora's death, Louis XV. had passed away, little regretted by his subjects, who were eagerly looking to the new reign as the inauguration of a new era. The young King was known to be, roughly speaking, all that his grandfather had not been—irreproachable in morals, deeply impressed with the responsibilities of his position, sincerely bent on promoting the welfare of his subjects. His girl-queen was, as yet, beloved for her beauty, her winning youthful ways, her graciousness and gaiety. All that was best in the nation throbbed with hope that now at last old grievances would be swept away, old wrongs redressed, and for a time it seemed as if this hope might be fulfilled.

Amid the universal excitement, Julie appears at first to have rather inclined to the unpopular part of Cassandra. The Abbé Morellet, writing after the Revolution, has recorded how, when returning from Versailles on the day following that of the King's death, he encountered her driving with some friends, and how his eager announcement: "It is all over,"

was met with this dispiriting comment thrown from the carriage window: "My dear abbé, we shall only change for the worse." Commenting on this all too accurate prophecy, Morellet makes the sensible remark that she was always inclined to look on the dark side of things, and that such people must *sometimes* be in the right. These gloomy forebodings, however, due probably to the personal anxieties with which she was then distracted, gave way to hope when she found that Turgot was to be a member of the new Ministry, and at times she almost forgot her own troubles in unselfish anticipation of the reforms which he would now have power to effect.

This remarkable man, one of the purest and noblest characters in history, had, at this time, been, as she says, for seventeen years her friend. Their intimacy must thus have dated far back into the period of her tutelage at St Joseph, and he was amongst those who, on the rupture with Madame du Deffand, espoused her part, to the extent of renouncing all friendship with this last-named lady. By birth, he belonged to the legal caste, but being a younger son was destined for the Church, and sent to study theology at the Sorbonne. It is worth noting that he never regretted the years so spent, but esteemed the mediæval institution of "theses" and "discussions" an excellent training for the intellect, and was wont in after years to say smilingly to his old college friend, Morellet: "My dear abbé, it's only divinity students like you and me who know how to reason correctly!" But, though of exemplary conduct (Morellet, with honest enthusiasm, records that he was wont to blush like a girl at the slightest approach to licentiousness in conversation), Turgot was an ex-

ceedingly bold thinker, and felt within himself a growing aversion to the ecclesiastical calling. This feeling was incomprehensible to most of his friends, who, for their own part, found no difficulty in reconciling speculative unorthodoxy with outward conformity, and endeavoured to dissuade him from a step which would, they said, completely spoil his career. He gently answered that they were quite justified in doing what their consciences permitted, but that for himself it was impossible to go on all his life wearing a mask; and therefore abandoned the Church for his father's profession, the Law. In this new vocation his talent and industry soon brought him success, and in the next ten years he rose from one position to another in the "Magistracy" of Paris.

It was during this period (1751-1761) that he began to frequent the *salons* of Madame du Deffand, Madame Geoffrin, and Madame Helvétius. His acquaintance with this last-named lady dated back to his student days at the Sorbonne, when she was still Catherine de Ligniville, and lived under the wing of her aunt, Madame de Graffigny, the popular novelist and playwright. Minette, to use her familiar appellation, was one of a family of twenty children, and would have been doomed to a "religious" life had not Madame de Graffigny come to the rescue. The aunt and niece had at first a hard struggle to make ends meet, but Madame de Graffigny was more successful than most women-writers of that time in making literature pay, and, in the end, attained a fairly comfortable position. Turgot, who was a great admirer of her novels, came often to her house in the Rue d'Enfer, not far from the Sorbonne, to discuss literature with her, and, incidentally, to play

TURGOT

FROM THE PAINTING IN THE MUSÉE DE VERSAILLES

at shuttlecock with Minette, despite the hindrance of a scholar's gown. Morellet, who was introduced by his friend to the two ladies, saw, as he thought, in those games of shuttlecock, and the conversations accompanying them, the beginning of a hopeful romance; but apparently it was all on one side, for in 1751 Mademoiselle de Ligniville married Helvétius, the wealthy farmer-general and dinner-giving Mæcenas of the Encyclopedists, and there is every reason to believe that she was satisfied with her choice. Turgot and she, however, continued friends to the last, and when, after twenty years of married life, she became a widow he would fain have made her his wife, but the memory of her dead husband was still supreme in her heart, and though she long survived him she would never marry again.

Turgot, on his side, remained single all his life—a life consistently devoted to the loftiest and most unselfish aims. His passionate desire for social amelioration—on which subject, he was, as Mademoiselle de Lespinasse aptly expresses it, "a fanatic"—found comparatively little scope so long as he continued to practise law in Paris; but in 1761 he was appointed to the Intendancy of Limoges—*i.e.* of three provinces comprised under that name. For twelve years he held this post, and during that time, by the excellence of his administration, he did all that under the existing laws was possible to lighten the burdens of the suffering peasantry. When, in August 1774, he was appointed Comptroller-General of the Finances, it seemed to him, and to his many sympathisers, that the opportunity for a radical reform—to be effected by introducing modifications into

those laws—was at last granted him. In a letter to Guibert, Julie de Lespinasse records with something like transport what Carlyle calls his "noblest plainness of speech" to the King, and the King's "noblest royal trustfulness," in return.

"He had made some difficulty about accepting the Comptrollership when M. de Maurepas on behalf of the King offered it to him. When he went to thank the King, the King said to him: 'So, you would rather not have been Comptroller-General?' 'Sire,' said M. Turgot, 'I confess I would rather have had the Admiralty, because it is more of a fixed position, and I should have been more certain of doing good in it. But now I yield, not to the King, but to the honest man.' The King took hold of both his hands, and said: 'You shall never repent it.' M. Turgot added: 'Sire, it is my duty to represent to your Majesty the necessity of economy. Your Majesty should be the first to set an example in this respect. No doubt the Abbé Terray[1] has already said the same thing to your Majesty.' 'Yes,' said the King, 'he has. But not as you have said it.' You may take all this as absolutely certain, for M. Turgot never adds a word to the truth. This sympathy on the King's part is M. Turgot's great hope, and I believe you will share in it."

Alas! that hope was soon to be borne down by the

[1] Turgot's predecessor as Comptroller-General. His character may be conjectured from the following anecdote. When Maurepas first proposed Turgot for the post Louis objected: "But they say he never goes to Mass!" "I don't know how that may be, Sire," answered Maurepas, "but the Abbé Terray always went." The honest young King admitted that this argument was conclusive, and sent for Turgot.

forces of selfishness, ignorance and prejudice—forces which, within twenty years' time, were destined to plunge alike the nation and its innocent, well-meaning sovereign into the most awful cataclysm known to modern history.

CHAPTER XXIII

POLITICS AND A PRETTY WEDDING

APART from her sympathetic watching of Turgot's career, Julie, during the autumn of 1774, found some distraction from her troubles in making acquaintance with an almost forgotten statesman, who by that shrewd observer of politics and politicians. Benjamin Disraeli, was reckoned among the "suppressed characters of English history." Lord Shelburne, for it was he, had relations with some members of the Encyclopedic party, chiefly with Morellet, who, two years previously, had been a guest at his country house in England. It was but natural that, when he in his turn visited Paris, he should desire an introduction to an Encyclopedist so prominent as Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. During his stay in France they saw a great deal of each other, and a warm friendship grew up between them. On her side, this was no doubt partly a result of the Anglomania which she shared with most of the Philosophic party, and which blended with her sympathies in politics, literature, and philanthropy.

"He is a man of intellect," she writes to Guibert, "he is the leader of the Opposition, he was the friend of Sterne, he adores his works. Naturally he attracts me strongly." A little later, in reply to some criticism of Guibert's: "Yes; that is the very reason why I admire him so much, because he is the leader of the Opposition. What a terrible misfortune not to be born

under a Government like that! For my part, weak and unhappy creature that I am, if I could have another incarnation, I should prefer to be the lowest member of the House of Commons rather than the King of Prussia himself. Only the glory of Voltaire can console me for not being born an Englishwoman. . . . Do you know how he [Lord Shelburne] finds repose from the fatigues of statesmanship? In actions of beneficence worthy of a sovereign, in founding public establishments for the education of all the tenants on his estates, in superintending every detail regarding their instruction and well-being. Such is the chosen recreation of a man only thirty-four. . . . There is an Englishman worthy to have been a friend to that marvel and miracle of the Spanish nation (Mora). . . . How widely different from one of our charming French courtiers! Ah! Montesquieu is right; 'the Government makes the man.'"

Perhaps we may scarcely feel inclined to endorse this conception of eighteenth-century England as a home for political freedom and enlightened philanthropy. Yet the mere fact that, to this most intelligent Frenchwoman, an Opposition permitted to have a recognised existence, and a landlord who built schools for the children of his tenantry, appeared in the light of moral miracles, has a significance all its own. It must be remembered also that her verdict on the respective positions of the two countries in these matters is substantially in agreement with that of the most competent contemporary authorities on either side of the Channel.

Lord Shelburne, on his side, was scarcely less fascinated. He "entreated, pressed" her, as she says,

to[1] pay him a visit in England; the change, he thought, would restore her health. Julie was deeply flattered, and half-tempted by his invitation, but her ingrained dislike to travelling, which had increased with increasing physical weakness, prevented her from accepting it. Had she done so, it would have been interesting to learn her impressions of the Encyclopedic Utopia. Probably they would have been of a fairly favourable nature, for her knowledge of the language, and her extreme adaptability, no less than the reputation for decorum which she had always (and up till very recently deservedly) enjoyed, would almost certainly have made her stay in England a success.

To Turgot, meanwhile, as to the one person by whom the condition of France might be ameliorated, her eyes were eagerly turned. Her letters are full of affectionate concern for his health, for he suffered from frequent and dangerous attacks of gout.

"I never cease repeating: 'God preserve him!'" she writes to Condorcet. "If he is not able to carry out his good purpose, we shall be—not just where we were before, but—a thousand times worse off, for we shall have lost hope, the only comfort of the unfortunate."

She turns then to the more concrete question of Condorcet's own interest and hopes that Turgot will do something to increase the salary attaching to his post as secretary to the Academy of Sciences. It ought, by rights, she says, to amount to 260 pounds, an income which would enable "kind Condorcet to have soup and meat for his dinner every day, and to

[1] Lord Shelburne was at this time a widower. But there would have been no difficulty in providing a chaperon from among the ladies of his family.

keep a carriage, either for calling on his friends in, or for lending to them."

Even from a twentieth-century point of view, this suggestion can scarcely be regarded in the light of a "job," for the position of secretary entailed a considerable amount of work, and Condorcet's services to science were such as entitled him to some measure of substantial recognition. The truly remarkable part of the matter is that Julie de Lespinasse, while anxious that Condorcet should reap some advantage from possessing, literally, a friend at Court, always rejected with scorn and repulsion the idea of securing any such advantage for herself. To the moral sense of her age it would have seemed only lawful and right that Turgot should supplement her meagre income by a pension from the royal treasury. The ill-natured insinuations of enemies, like Horace Walpole and Madame du Deffand, on this point, testify far less significantly to the general consensus of public opinion than does the blundering but well-intentioned action of Guibert, who ventured to broach the question of a pension for Mademoiselle de Lespinasse to the Comptroller-General in person. Turgot, whose conscience obliged him, as we have seen, to preach the duty of retrenchment to royalty itself, and who in his own person had practised it by renouncing a large proportion of the emoluments attaching to his post, received the suggestion coldly, and the Colonel seems to have been near to a quarrel with him on that account. He admitted as much to Julie de Lespinasse, who forthwith wrote in hot haste to rebuke his forwardness on her behalf, and hinder it from proceeding further.

"My dear friend, you are mad! You are going to

say things against M. Turgot, and, that, on my account! You are very kind, and mean well, but you are mistaken if you think that poverty or material well-being could have any effect on my happiness, one way or other."

Turgot, she says, is only acting honourably, in not bestowing public money upon her, and Guibert has done very wrong in troubling him, on her account, and then resenting his refusal.

To a man of Turgot's character this sensitive self-respect must have been unspeakably grateful, and it doubtless increased the confidence with which he turned to her for counsel and sympathy amid the troubles inevitably besetting his thorny path as reformer. The first of these arose in connection with a subject which seems perennially destined to be a stumbling block for reforming ministers—the question of Free Trade in corn. The internal corn trade in France was then hampered by many vexatious restrictions tending to prevent the sale of grain outside the district in which it was grown. Local famines and local "corners" were the natural result, and Turgot, realising this, had, during his years of Intendantship, succeeded in almost abolishing these restrictions so far as his own district was concerned. One of his first actions on becoming Comptroller-General was to extend this reform over the whole country by a decree enacting that "it shall be free, to all persons whatever, to carry on, as it may seem best to them, their trade in corn and flour, to sell and to buy it, in whatever places they choose throughout the kingdom."

This eminently reasonable and beneficent measure did not, however, appeal to all classes of the popula-

tion. The merchants, who, during seasons of local scarcity, had been able to obtain fancy prices for their corn, dreaded the results of open competition with other districts not equally afflicted. The dwellers in these more favoured localities were, on their part, alarmed at the prospect of having their stock of home-grown provision diminished in order to supply the needs of other provinces. Another factor in the problem is suggested by that shrewd young woman, Manon Phlipon, who observes that the people had hitherto regarded misery as their inevitable portion, and that this first dawn of hope had changed their sullen acquiescence into a delirious persuasion that all things were about at once to become new. If we further consider that Turgot, like all reformers, had many unscrupulous and implacable enemies, who secretly did everything in their power to foment the popular agitation, we shall be less at a loss to account for the so-called corn riots[1] of 1775.

They began in the month of April at Dijon, and from that point speedily spread to Paris and Versailles. "Cheap bread" was the cry of the rioters, and barns, warehouses, and bakers' shops were the objects of their attack, but as they always burnt and destroyed instead of distributing the provisions therein contained it was obvious that they did not really aim at lowering the price of food. Turgot, who clearly understood that the disturbance, so far at least as the ringleaders were concerned, had nothing genuine about it, but was merely designed to bring odium upon his administration, was firm in maintaining that no concessions must be made to the mob. The young King, well meaning as usual, and as usual painfully weak, was at first

[1] Guerre des farines.

alarmed into ordering a reduction in the market price of bread, while all the time the spoil of mills and provision shops was being wantonly thrown in the gutters and trampled underfoot by these champions of the poor man's loaf. It took less than twenty-four hours to convince poor Louis of his folly, and he sent in haste to Turgot, entreating his help in repairing it. Turgot came to him at once, and by firm and prompt measures of repression soon succeeded in restoring tranquillity.

Every stage of this unhappy business was watched by Julie de Lespinasse with the most sympathetic anxiety.

"Our friend has kept his head through the storm" (she writes to Condorcet), "his courage and presence of mind have not forsaken him; he has worked day and night. . . . Is it not heart-breaking to see that, with a King who desires to do right, and a minister who has no other thought, only evil is done, and many people are pleased to have it so?"

A few days later:

"I have been paralysed with terror. . . . I was so afraid his health would give way. He has indeed shown them that he has as much strength of character as genius and highmindedness. . . . I have not been to the country. In the first place, if I had been there, I should have come back here during these troubles. I did not see M. Turgot, but I had news of him ten times a day, and I could not have endured to be without. And so the month of May has gone by, and that was the month when I should have liked to have quiet and good air. Besides, I saw that M.

d'Alembert did not want to lose me, though he was careful not to say so."

Again:

"His illness and these last troubles must have thrown him much behind with his work. For my part, however much it may have cost me,[1] I cannot reproach myself with having robbed him of a minute. I cannot understand how anybody, without absolute necessity, can worry a man overwhelmed with business."

The following allusion to Condorcet's "Letters on the Corn Trade," published in defence of Turgot soon after the riots, shows how, in spite of this admirable self-effacement, her counsel was sought and valued by the harassed Comptroller-General.

"It is my fault, kind Condorcet, that the fourth and fifth letters were not published a week ago. I entreated M. Dupont to wait for the sixth, and bring out all three together . . . and M. Turgot and M. Dupont were quite convinced by my arguments. It would be too long to tell them to you here, but you must take my word for it, that, without that sixth letter, the others would not make the impression or excite the interest that they ought."

There is surely something noble in this devotion to impersonal interests at a time when her whole being was crushed beneath a sorrow which brought to its climax all the accumulated tragedy of the preceding

[1] A few weeks later she writes to Guibert that Turgot has just been to see her. He came at eleven in the morning and stayed till one. They had a longer conversation than she has had with him since his accession to the Comptrollership, and she finds him friendly and unspoilt as ever.

years. For the blow had fallen at last. Two or three days before the outbreak of the *Guerre des Farines*, a contract of marriage was signed between Jacques Antoine Hippolyte, Count de Guibert, and Alexandrine Louise Boutinon des Hayes de Courcelles. The alliance had been in contemplation nearly two years, and in the summer of the previous year Guibert had paid a short visit of exploration to the château of the young lady's father. Mademoiselle de Courcelles, who was then only sixteen, and if we may trust to her portrait by Greuze a charmingly pretty girl, made an entirely pleasing impression upon the susceptible Colonel, and she, on her side, was as much fascinated by him, as older and more experienced women were wont to be. The marriage therefore, though, from the material point of view, an eminently satisfactory one to Guibert[1] (for Mademoiselle de Courcelles was "weel-tochered," no less than "weel-fa'ured"), was not without a redeeming element of romance.

It was precisely this element, however, which he was most anxious to conceal from Julie de Lespinasse. The problem of being in love with two or more women at the same time presented no difficulties to this accomplished amorist. But the task of explaining this psychological phenomenon to the ladies in question proved sometimes too much even for his abilities. We have seen how sedulously he had represented his matrimonial designs as based entirely upon prudence, and irrespective of any woman in particular. Through the winter of 1774-5 he had,

[1] About 500 pounds a year seems to have been her immediate dowry, but a good deal of gratuitous board and lodging, and expectations for the future, must be superadded.

MADEMOISELLE DE COURCELLES, AFTERWARDS COMTESSE DE GUIBERT

FROM A PAINTING BY GREUZE

in conversation with Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, allowed the subject so completely to drop that she half believed him resolved upon a single life; while all the time negotiations were in progress, and he was losing no opportunity of paying his court in person to Mademoiselle de Courcelles. Once the betrothal was about to be formally announced, however, it became plainly impossible any longer to conceal the truth. After a clumsy attempt at preparation, which aroused an agony of apprehension in his unhappy victim, he told her of his approaching marriage, representing it as entirely an *affaire de convenance*, and suppressing the fact that he had anything more than a formal acquaintance with his future bride.

To the forsaken woman it seemed that now indeed she had received her death blow. "If we must cease to love, then I must cease to live!" was the heart-broken cry which rose to her lips. For I must emphasise the fact that she regarded Guibert's marriage as constituting an impassable barrier between him and her. Such a point of view was in her time by no means universally recognised, nor was it shared by Guibert himself. The "Letters"[1] recently published make it plain that—his honeymoon once well over—he was anxious to renew their former relations, but encountered a resolution which he found it impossible to shake. For the short remainder of her unhappy life, Julie de Lespinasse was free from all reproach, and we cannot but feel that this determination not to injure another woman in some measure expiated her former wrongdoing.

Her attitude towards her unconscious rival was indeed conspicuously generous throughout. The

[1] By the Comte de Villeneuve-Guibert.

bitterness of her heart overflowed often enough in reproaches to Guibert, but of his betrothed she uniformly speaks in terms of respect, and even of kindness. Once she terrified Guibert beyond measure by appearing unexpectedly in his rooms on an evening when she knew that he was to receive a visit from Mademoiselle de Courcelles and her mother. The wretched man vainly implored her to withdraw before their arrival. She was determined to see his future wife, but the scene which followed relieved him of his fears. Mademoiselle de Lespinasse made herself as delightful as only she could. The girl was fascinated by her charm of manner and the caressing tenderness with which she welcomed the *fiancée* of an old and valued friend. Next day, Julie, as if determined to be thorough in her great renunciation, wrote to Guibert:

"I thought her charming, and well deserving of the interest you feel in her. The manners and appearance of her mother are also most pleasing and attractive. Yes, you will be happy."

Guibert was gratified and even touched by this magnificent self-abnegation, but he considered that it was scarcely maintained with sufficient consistency. There was in his opinion a want of good taste about such letters of congratulation as that which he received after the formal signing of his marriage contract.

"And so, the sentence is signed! God grant it may be as decisive for your happiness as for my death! . . . Farewell, may your life be always too full and too happy to leave room for the remembrance of an unfortunate woman who loved you!"

He did not like to *think* that he was killing the woman whom he professed still to love, but to be *told* it was really very unpleasant. He was so worried, or so he said, as to fall quite ill, and wrote, on this score, a piteous appeal for forbearance to Julie, who replied, more coldly than was her wont in such cases: "Marriage will do marvels for you. Your wife will insist on your taking care of your health." Altogether, his position, as we have some satisfaction in reflecting, was far from comfortable, and he must have rejoiced when the time came to leave Paris for his wedding, which was to take place at the Chateau de Courcelles.[1]

It was in that loveliest of all seasons, "the marriage time of May and June,"[2] that the bridal rites were celebrated. We would fain have had some account of the solemnity, which must certainly have been what in modern phrase is known as a "pretty wedding," but none such has come down to us. One are left to imagine the preliminary calling of banns, with their quaint formula: "There is a promise of marriage between the high and puissant seigneur Jacques Antoine Hippolyte de Guibert, and the high and puissant demoiselle Alexandrine Louise Boutinon des Hayes de Courcelles, a minor of this parish"; the concourse of neighbours who, on the day before the ceremony, flocked to admire the *corbeille*, or bridegroom's gift, set out for show as wedding presents are now; the charming girl-bride, attired, as was the wont of fashionable brides, in a much *décolleté* gown of silver brocade, with unveiled face but hair wreathed with the traditional orange blossoms, attended by the two

[1] Near Gien, in the Orleanais.
[2] Emily Brontë.

chevaliers de main, who performed the functions of the modern bridesmaid; the wedding Mass; and the banquet which followed it. Yet one valuable memorial of the occasion we do possess—an entry in the diary of the bridegroom. It deals, however, with subjects more interesting to the writer than any external details—the emotions and reflections of Guibert himself. This is what he writes on the evening of the momentous day.

"June 1st, 1775.—My wedding-day, the beginning of a new life. Shuddered involuntarily during the ceremony. It was my liberty, my whole life that I was risking. Never have so many thoughts and feelings harassed my soul. Oh, what an abyss, what a labyrinth is the heart of man. I am completely bewildered by the impulses of mine. But everything promises me happiness. I am marrying a young, pretty, gentle, susceptible woman. She loves me. I feel that she is made to be loved, I love her already."

Not a thought for the inexperienced child of seventeen, whose happiness must henceforth depend mainly on him. No mention of the heartbroken woman who, far away in Paris, was realising, as she afterwards bitterly wrote, the despair which knows neither words nor tears. Equally characteristic is the entry which follows.

"June 1st-6th.—The days have passed like a dream, and such indeed is my new condition, and the love, the sweetness, the frankness, the charm of my young wife. Her nature unfolds itself to me day by day. I love her, I shall continue to love her. I firmly believe that I shall be happy."

Certainly Guibert spoke no more than the truth when he wrote about this time to Julie de Lespinasse, in words which roused her to an inexplicable fury of resentment: "Do not break your heart for me, I beseech you. I am not worthy of all that you have suffered for my sake."

CHAPTER XXIV

TWO LITERARY ENTERPRISES

WHEN Mademoiselle de Lespinasse declared that Guibert had signed her sentence of death on the same day as his marriage contract she spoke no more than the truth. It is extremely unlikely that she would, in any circumstances, have lived to be old, and the mental suffering of the last few years had, of course, gravely affected her always fragile health. But this final blow—she survived it barely a twelvemonth—must certainly have hastened the end. In the bitterness of her heart she had likened this marriage to a violent operation,[1] which must either cure or kill her, and at times a wild hope seems to have crossed her mind that the first alternative might ensue.

"So often it seems to me that scarcely anything more is needed to deliver me from the misfortune of loving you," she writes, "and then I feel almost ashamed of having made you my principal interest in life. But more often I feel myself bound and chained on all sides, so that not a movement is possible to me, and then death seems my only refuge from you."

When the marriage is accomplished, she expresses herself in still stronger terms.

"Your marriage has brought me a thorough understanding of your character, and has closed my heart

[1] In order to realise the force of this simile, we must imagine ourselves back in the days when chloroform, antiseptic dressings, and X-rays were unknown, and when surgical operations were still regarded with an awe undiminished by excessive familiarity.

against you for ever. There was a time when I would rather have seen you unhappy than contemptible. That time is over. . . . No doubt it will cost you a little to be no longer the first and only object of a restless, impassioned nature, which brings, if not interest, at least excitement into your life. . . . I understand what you are at last. I see that you have degraded yourself for 500 pounds a year. I see that you did not mind reducing me to despair, and that you only looked on me as a makeshift till your marriage was arranged."

Had her physical condition been more favourable she might, perhaps, even now, have succeeded in living down the past. But she was too weak, and the poison had sunk too deeply into her nature. For years past she had suffered from insomnia, but now sleep seemed banished for ever. If, from mere exhaustion, she lost consciousness for a few minutes, she wakened again with a start to the recollection that Guibert had forsaken her. Her frail body was repeatedly shaken by convulsions of terrible violence, the effect, as she says, "of despair."

"M. d'Alembert was frightened," she says of one such attack, "and I had not enough presence of mind left to reassure him. His anxiety wrung my heart and I burst into tears. I could not speak, and he says that in my distraction I twice repeated: 'I am dying. Leave me alone.' At these words he was much upset, he shed tears and wanted to go and fetch my friends."

With his usual inconceivable tactlessness, poor d'Alembert regretted the absence of Guibert. "*He* could have consoled you. You have been more un-

happy than ever since he left Paris."[1] The name had a tonic effect. "I felt that I must control myself," she proceeds, "so as not to break this excellent man's heart. I made an effort, and told him that I had had an attack of nerves in addition to my usual pain, and in fact, one hand and arm were all twisted and bent. I took a sedative; he had sent for a doctor; to escape having to see him, I collected all the strength and reason that were left to me, and shut myself up in my room."

It would even seem that the balance of her mind had been disturbed by excessive suffering, for she found her principal consolation in holding converse, by word *and letter*, with the generous spirit which over a year before had quitted this world for ever. She had no clear belief in another life, no steadfast hope of future reunion. Once, indeed,[2] she piteously regrets that she is not, like a new-made widow of her acquaintance, supported by "this chimera." But imagination sometimes supplied the part of faith, and Mora then seemed again living and at her side.

"I see him," she writes to Guibert, "he lives, he breathes for me, he hears me. . . . You are not more real to me than M. de Mora has been for an hour past. Oh, divine being, he has pardoned me, he loved me."

It must not, however, be supposed that her intellectual powers were, in ordinary matters, at all impaired. On the contrary, it seems as if her perception had never been quicker or her judgment saner than during this last agonising year. That she made

[1] *i.e.* to be married.

[2] "Ah, if I could have the same chimera as Madame de Muy! I should think I had recovered my happiness. She is sure that she will see M. de Muy again. What a rock of consolation for a desolate soul!"

continual efforts to shake off the incubus which was crushing her, and attain to a healthier frame of mind, is plainly shown by the energy with which, despite great bodily weakness, she at this time threw herself into external activities of every kind. Her eager interest in the *Guerre des Farines* has already been noticed, and in the letters to Guibert she continually alludes to other distractions, social and intellectual no less than political.

"I have laid down a rule for myself," she says, "to which I have been tolerably faithful, and which answers well enough. I lead a more social life. I am always surrounded by people who love and value me, though not because I deserve it. . . . They rescue me, so to speak, from my grief, by never leaving me a moment to myself." And again: "I am going to use all the strength I have left me, to make the time hang less heavily. This afternoon, I have already engaged myself for five or six things which are all more than indifferent to me, but all in the company of people who care for me a little, and that will give me courage. To-morrow, I am going to Auteuil,[1] on Friday to Passy, to hear that famous prima donna who was here last year, and who, they say, has such a lovely voice, and is at the same time such a perfect fool. That is a pleasure I could have enjoyed, if my mind had been more tranquil."

In the same letter she speaks of Turgot and Malesherbes (now also a minister), of their schemes for reform, and the confidence which they both repose in her, adding pathetically: "But this may look like boasting, and there is no great pleasure in vanity, when one is dying of sorrow."

[1] Probably to visit the Comtesse de Boufflers.

Yet the very fact that she felt irresistibly impelled to render an account of every occupation and every phase of feeling, to the man whom she now professed (and perhaps truly) to despise, shows but too plainly how far he was from having lost his hold upon her. The habit of turning to him for sympathy was so deeply rooted that, in her weakened condition, she was powerless to eradicate it. "I have seen and heard so many things since your departure," she says, "and I kept saying to myself: 'All this would be full of life and interest for me, if I could share it with him, but since I must hold no communication with him, it is not worth the trouble of listening.'" She was unshaken in her resolution that they must not meet again as lovers—a resolution which Guibert, being just then, as became a newly married man, in a momentary paroxysm of virtue, highly applauded. But to abandon the idea of meeting again as friends was a renunciation totally beyond her power.

As a friend, therefore, she set herself to serve Guibert. An opportunity of doing so lay ready to her hand, provided by the gentleman in question, who seemed to think, and, as the event proved, not altogether wrongly, that the kindest thing he could do for her (as well as for himself) was to supply her with an occupation which had his interest for object. The literary ambitions of Guibert had been naturally raised to a high pitch by the extraordinary success of his Essay on Tactics, and were by no means limited to military subjects. He had already written one tragedy, of which we shall presently hear more, and was now at work upon a second. But, like a true Frenchman, he felt that, until he had obtained the benediction of the national high court of letters, some-

thing was lacking to his fame. For at least a twelvemonth past he had had upon the stocks an essay in praise of Catinat, the celebrated general of Louis XIV., that being the subject fixed for the Academy competition of 1775. Julie de Lespinasse had long been in his confidence with regard to this project, and had promised him every assistance in carrying it out —no empty promise from a person who was commonly reputed to have the making of Academicians in her hands,[1] and might naturally be supposed to possess some influence in such a minor matter as the awarding of a prize. The "eulogium" was completed about the time of Guibert's marriage, and almost his first communication with Julie after that event was for the purpose of enclosing the precious MS. The proceeding scarcely strikes one as being distinguished by delicacy, but the effect seems to have been rather beneficial than otherwise. Feeling the demand made upon her magnanimity, she determined to respond to it worthily; and besides, the tension of her feelings found relief in the task, to her always a congenial one, of literary criticism.

Her judgment on "Catinat" is indeed remarkable, as her judgments on literature always are, for justice and frankness. At this distance of time her estimate of Guibert's abilities certainly does appear an extravagantly high one, but M. de Ségur has pointed out that in this respect she fell far short of the bulk of her contemporaries, and, so far from being misled by partiality, was almost the only person who then realised, or at least endeavoured to correct, the literary deficiencies of this brilliant popular idol. She com-

[1] She herself admits to having, by her zealous canvassing, procured this distinction for the Chevalier de Chastellux.

pares his eulogium with that of La Harpe[1] which had been likewise confided to her by the author—the only one of the other fourteen competitors who seemed to her at all formidable. She observes, with much apparent justice, that Guibert's technical knowledge gives him a great advantage so far as regards the purely military aspect of the theme. In point of style, however, La Harpe is most approved by her of the two. Guibert, she says, does not always write clearly, and uses expressions which are either eccentric or too familiar, but, for all that, he has more power and more inspiration than his rival, and, on the whole, he seems to her most worthy of the prize.

Yet, despite all her tactful wirepulling, the contest between these rival *littérateurs* (of whom one is now barely remembered, and the other, save for his sasociation with herself, wholly forgotten) was not decided as she hoped. When Saint Lambert, one of the Academicians on whose support she had counted, announced to her that he preferred La Harpe's essay, and must vote for it, she is said to have burst into tears. When the fatal decision had been arrived at, and she learnt that the first prize had been awarded to La Harpe, and that Guibert had only an honourable mention, and was not alone even in that dubious consolation, her resentment broke hotly forth.

"If Voltaire had competed and they had given you the honourable mention, it would have been all right. But for you to come after M. de la Harpe, and to be bracketed with a young man of twenty, revolts

[1] In view of a recent controversy the following rebuke written by her to Guibert is worth notice:—"You must call him M. de La Harpe, and not simply la Harpe. That is an honour only due to men like Racine, Voltaire, etc., and must not be conferred on a *littérateur* of our own day."

me to a degree which I cannot express, and have been unable to conceal. It hurts my pride, and makes me unjust, for I feel almost ready to hate the man[1] who has been preferred to you."

Madame Roland, then Mademoiselle Phlipon, chanced this particular year to be present at the grand assembly held annually at the Louvre[2] by the Academy, on St Louis' Day (25th August), and has left us a vivid account of the proceedings. They began with a musical Mass, chanted by opera singers, in what was known as the Academy Chapel. The sermon, as was usual on this day, took the form of a panegyric on the sainted king, but the preacher, a certain Abbé de Besflas, with leanings to the philosophic party, obtained a *succès de scandale* by introducing sundry sly hits at monarchical government as understood in France in the eighteenth century. After a morning thus spent, the audience separated, presumably for dinner, reassembling in the afternoon for the reading of the prize essay, and the delivery of d'Alembert's yearly address. Manon considered La Harpe's production excellent, but the secretary's witty and eloquent oration, though yearly looked forward to in Paris as a social event of the first importance, was to her rather a disappointment, for the speaker's unfortunate voice and face prevented her from enjoying his periods. The audience was extremely brilliant, comprising all the fashionable *élite* of both sexes. Frenchwomen, in those days, took

[1] Yet this resentment did not prevent her from promoting the election of La Harpe, of whose writings she generally speaks with approval, to the Academy in the following year.

[2] What is now the Institute was then, as has been already remarked, the Collège des Quatre Nations.

een interest in the Academy and, considering the judices of the time, it cannot be alleged that the Academy was ungenerous in its attitude towards them. To say nothing of the enormous influence exercised by such ladies as Mademoiselle de Lespinasse and Madame de Lambert in the election of members, women were allowed to take part in the literary competitions, and not infrequently did so, though I do not know that any lady had as yet obtained a prize. Nor was this all, for, if we are to believe that rather doubtful authority, Madame de Genlis, d'Alembert was at this time revolving in his mind the possibility of an innovation which, after a hundred and forty years still remains to be accomplished—the admission, namely, of women within the sacred circle of the "Immortals." According to her, he designed to propose the creation of four supplementary places, for ladies only, and had already fixed upon the first occupants thereof. She, Madame de Genlis, was to hold the highest rank among them; the other three were to be Madame de Montesson, a lady who had written plays of sorts, and made a great marriage, Madame d'Houdetot, beloved of Rousseau, and author of some exceedingly licentious poems, and Madame d'Angivillier, the mistress of a literary *salon*.

St Louis' Day was altogether a notable epoch in the fashionable Parisian calendar, for it marked yet another fixture of high import—the opening of the triennial exhibition held by the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture. This function, which dated back to the reign of Louis XIV., took place likewise at the Louvre. The room set apart for this purpose, which was situated not far from the Gallery of Apollo, was known as the *Salon*, a name ever since inseparably

attached to similar exhibitions in Paris. During the ten years spent by Mademoiselle de Lespinasse under Madame du Deffand's roof, the *Salon* had, through the influence of Greuze, sustained an appreciable part in the new propaganda of sympathy for the less favoured classes of society. His pictures of peasant life, impossible as they are, in their prettiness, sentimentality, and refinement, had yet a humanising effect. His "Father of a Family reading the Bible to his Children," a very Frenchified version of "The Cottar's Saturday Night," which was exhibited at the *Salon* of 1755, created a perfect *furore*, and the popular enthusiasm continued steadily to rise, till it reached its climax on the appearance, in 1761, of his "Village Bride."[1]

By 1775, however, the cult of "sensibility" was, owing mainly to the powerful agency of Rousseau, pretty firmly established, and visitors to the *Salon* had leisure for the discussion of exhibits distinguished by no particular moral purpose. Among the most popular pictures of the year we may mention "Scenes in the Seraglio," by Vanloo; two landscapes by Vernet, and the portraits of Louis XVI. and of Gluck, by Duplessis. In the department of sculpture, much attention was awarded to the busts of Turgot and of Sophie Arnould (as Iphigénie) by Houdon.

Julie de Lespinasse, as became a leader of society, did not fail to visit the *Salon* within two or three days of its opening. She was anxious that Guibert should make one of her party on the occasion; for Guibert, with his wife and her parents, was now once more in Paris. The first week after his marriage had been passed at Courcelles (honeymoon trips, though not quite unknown, were far from being an established

[1] Both these pictures can now be seen in the Louvre.

fashion), but he had then been obliged by military duty to leave his young bride for a while. Now, however, he had obtained leave of absence, and was in Paris on business connected with a play of his writing already alluded to. That he did not accept Julie's invitation may have been due either to the claims of this business or to the knowledge that his wife and her mother had fixed on the same day for visiting the *Salon*. Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, while wandering with her friends from picture to picture, caught sight of the young girl, and at once approached her with the utmost courtesy.

"Believe me or not, as you please," she writes, with a touch of pathetic humour, to Guibert, "but it is a fact that I have spent a long time to-day with your wife.[1] I went up to her and talked to her about her health, and her pursuits, and about all the pictures, and I will venture to say you will be told I am *very nice*, and won't believe a word of it. Do you realise what I am growing into, and the light in which you must accustom yourself to regard me? I am really good enough to be Grandison's wife or sister. I am growing so perfect that it frightens me. I believe I am like the swan, who sings best when he is dying. Well, even that is something gained. You will say 'What a pity she died just now!'"

Guibert, meanwhile, was absorbed in an undertaking which promised to indemnify him for his academical disappointment, the representation of his tragedy, *Le Connétable de Bourbon*, before the Court at Versailles. The piece in question, founded upon the well-known story of Bourbon's revolt against Francis

[1] Madame, votre femme. This more ceremonious form is of course untranslatable.

THE TEMPLE, RESIDENCE OF THE PRINCE DE CONTI, WHERE GUIBERT GAVE READINGS OF "THE CONSTABLE"

FROM A PAINTING IN THE MUSÉE CARNAVALET

the First, is pronounced by so competent an authority as the Marquis de Ségur to possess a certain amount of merit. The present writer must confess to finding it very poor stuff indeed. But it was highly admired by Guibert's contemporaries, and even Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, fastidious critic though she was, on the whole endorsed the popular verdict—with this reservation, that she did not consider *Le Connétable* adapted to the stage. The correctness of her judgment was sufficiently demonstrated by results. So long as Guibert contented himself with reading his play aloud to fashionable audiences in one great house after another it had a tremendous success. Its fame even reached the ears of the young Queen; Guibert was honoured with a royal command to give a reading at Versailles, and Marie Antoinette, charmed by the reading and the reader, and also, it is said, by the young Comtesse de Guibert, determined, in her impulsive fashion, to have the play acted in honour of an approaching marriage in the royal family.

The author was, naturally enough, intoxicated by so high a distinction. But Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, though deeply sympathetic, was unable to disguise her fears for the result. She was so nervous that she could not make up her mind to use the ticket for the performance sent her by Guibert.

"No, I shall not go," she writes. . . . "I shall take the keenest interest in your success. . . . At five o'clock, when the *Connétable* begins, I shall imitate a prophet, whose name I forget,[1] who held his arms raised to heaven, while Joshua fought."

[1] Forgetfulness on such a point seems strange to those nurtured in the Protestant tradition, but similar instances occur frequently amongst even the most highly educated Frenchmen.

On the 20th of August the piece was produced, regardless of expense, the actors being drawn from the staff of the Comédie Française, while the military music performed between the acts was specially composed by the royal capellmeister. The audience included, of course, all the most assiduous *habitués* of the Court, but also many persons holding a much less dignified position. The habitual mingling of all social ranks and degrees within the royal precincts is, indeed, a most curious feature of an absolute, as contrasted with a constitutional, monarchy. *Presentation* at Court was a privilege fenced round by all manner of restrictions and observances. But everybody, not absolutely in rags, had the right, whether presented or not, of using the park at Versailles as a public promenade.[1] Not only so, but they could enter the palace at will, and wander, almost unchecked, over the stately halls and staircases, and even press their way, as spectators, to the apartment where royalty was consuming its meals. It is highly improbable, for example, that Mademoiselle de Lespinasse had been presented. Her birth would certainly have been an obstacle, and it does not appear that she ever came personally into contact with any of the royal family. Yet in her letters she repeatedly speaks of driving, in the carriage of some friend or other, to Versailles.

To those persons of humbler position who, on the strength of acquaintanceship with Guibert or otherwise, had obtained tickets for the *Constable*, the spectacle presented by the auditorium must have seemed deserving of, at least, as much attention as that upon the

[1] The royal family had not so much as a flower garden for its own private enjoyment. Hence Marie Antoinette's passion for the more retired Petit Trianon.

stage. Public curiosity is always strongly excited by the inauguration of a new reign, and in this case the changes resulting therefrom had been of an unusually marked description. Under the genial sway of Marie Antoinette, the French Court, released from the severe discipline of etiquette enforced by previous sovereigns, had been, says Taine, transformed into the brightest and gayest of *salons*.[1] So far as dress, indeed, was concerned that change to a more natural and more becoming fashion generally associated with the name of the ill-fated Queen, and familiar to us from the graceful portraits of Madame Vigée Lebrun, had not yet set in. Wasp waists, portentous crinolines, and what Mademoiselle de Lespinasse calls "pagoda" *coiffures*, were still almost universal. In fact, these last erections had now attained to that highest pitch of absurdity which preceded their downfall, and landscapes, gardens, and "sentimental" scenes (the last produced with the assistance of tiny figures in cardboard) might be admired upon the heads of ladies aspiring to lead the van of fashion.[2]

As regards the relaxation of the old stringent étiquette, however, it was sufficiently demonstrated by one significant detail. It had formerly been an inviolable law that theatrical performances at Court must be received in icy silence; applause being considered an infringement of the respect due to royalty. Marie Antoinette, refusing to be bound by this rule, applauded, in impulsive girlish fashion, the passages which took her fancy, and her example had, naturally,

[1] The change to "simplicity" dates, roughly, from 1780.

[2] The classical instance is the "Coiffure à La Belle Poule," which, however, dates only from 1778. It was so called from the name of a famous man-of-war, and represented a ship in full sail, with guns and sailors complete. This was accomplished by arranging the hair over a frame made in the requisite shape.

many imitators. Guibert and his supporters were, of course, highly flattered, but they could not disguise from themselves that, despite this mark of favour, the play was by no means an unmitigated success. The King was far from sharing the enthusiasm of his consort. Much to his honour, he had been deeply impressed by Turgot's admonitions on the necessity of retrenchment, and, though he could not bear to oppose any wish of the Queen's, the lavish expenditure with which the *Connétable* was staged caused him real distress. The theme, besides, of the piece, the treason of a French general against a French sovereign, struck him, not unreasonably, as ill suited for a Court performance. To crown all, the Royal House of Savoy, to which belonged the bridegroom in whose honour the spectacle had been intended, was represented as having played an unworthy part in inducing the Constable's defection. For all these reasons Louis did not join in the applause, but looked on with an expression of something approaching to sullenness on his good-natured though apathetic countenance, and it is needless to say that a large portion of the audience was emboldened to hint their disapproval in similar fashion.

From a purely artistic point of view the result was very much as Mademoiselle de Lespinasse had foreseen. The *Constable* proved a difficult play to act, and Lekain, who appeared in the title rôle, gave but a feeble interpretation of Guibert's hero—though he had the grace to apologise for his lukewarmness on the score of indisposition.

Meanwhile, Julie, installed on a sofa in the room of a sick friend[1] who had desired her company, kept

[1] Madame de Saint Chamans.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

FROM A BUST

repeating, as she says, the question of Bluebeard's imprudent wife: "Sister Anne, sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?" The "anyone" in this case was d'Alembert, who had been to the performance, and who was to bring her news of its good or ill success before she could attempt to sleep. About midnight he appeared, and, if we are to believe her account to Guibert, his version of what had occurred was entirely *couleur de rose.* "The success was so great that all rules were broken through. The splendid scene in the third act was applauded."

That this optimistic view was only assumed out of consideration for the author is plainly shown by the earnestness with which she afterwards endeavoured to dissuade him from having his piece acted a second time, and for a wider public. He would not be advised, however, and the undertaking proved—as she had foretold—a dead failure. To do him justice, he took this bitter lesson in good part, and though he wrote two other plays never attempted to have either of them produced upon the stage.

CHAPTER XXV

REQUIESCAT

IT was once a theory in general acceptation, if not by physiologists, yet certainly by novelists, that disappointed lovers, especially where belonging to the weaker sex, almost invariably died of consumption. The death of Julie de Lespinasse may perhaps be regarded as a confirmation of this remarkable empirical law. For at least four years she had certainly been afflicted with an almost perpetual and very wearing cough, not supposed at first to be actually dangerous, but afterwards giving ground for much apprehension; yet so vague is the language used by herself and her friends that we are left in doubt whether lung disease was the immediate cause of her death. It would seem that she rather succumbed to a complication of disorders, most of them of long standing, against which she had now lost the will and courage to struggle. The agonising nervous affections from which she suffered have already been noticed. She was besides liable to terrible fits of suffocation, following on convulsions of coughing, and bringing her, as she said, to the very verge of death.

"The terror which it caused my maid made me think that death must indeed be a fearful thing," she writes of one such attack. "She looked horror-struck, and as soon as I was able to speak I asked her what was wrong. She could only answer: 'I

thought you were going to die,' for she is too much accustomed to see me suffering, to be alarmed merely by that."

We constantly hear moreover of severe internal troubles, concerning which it is proper to mention that she expresses herself with a degree of reserve less certainly than is now usual, yet very rare in Frenchwomen of her generation. To all this we must add perpetual fever and sleeplessness, and the effects of that deadly drug to which she had, more and more frequently, recourse. And now that all hope and motive in life seemed withdrawn from her there ensued an ever-increasing weakness and an emaciation by which her friends were in the highest degree alarmed. Naturally, they urged upon her the necessity of seeking medical advice, but to this she was exceedingly averse—and, as it appears to us, with good reason. It has been already observed that the recognised treatment of consumptive suspects, amongst whom she must probably be numbered, had two distinctive features. Diet (*i.e.* semi-starvation) was one of these; and Julie, hitherto so indifferent on the score of good living,[1] had begun at times to feel that abnormal craving for food which seems to be Nature's last desperate attempt to repair the strength wasted by disease. Bleeding was the other; and here she had fresh in memory the example of Mora, who during one attack of hæmorrhage was bled

[1] "Just fancy that the keenest interest of my day has been an excellent dinner, which has left me some remorse for having shown so much moral weakness and so much physical capacity. You do not know the pleasure of feeling a passion for your food. I assure you that I have been feeling it for the last twelve or fifteen days, and the doctors, in their ignorant cruelty, declare that it is a bad symptom for my chest. If I could only soothe my cough, I should not trouble myself about their prophecies."

nine times, and in his intervals of apparent convalescence was still subjected to the same kind of treatment as a precautionary measure! It must be conceded that the Spanish physicians, who were mainly responsible in this case, were more thorough in their devotion to phlebotomy than their colleagues beyond the Pyrenees, but the difference was emphatically not of kind but of degree. On one occasion Mademoiselle de Lespinasse herself was bled twice from the foot as a remedy for earache (!), and in a letter to her brother, Abel, she recommends the surgeon[1] whom she generally employs for the purpose of bloodletting, much as people nowadays recommend a favourite dentist. Yet plainly she had not unlimited faith in this method of treatment, and repeatedly speaks of trying to avoid bleeding if possible, by using more harmless means, such as the warm bath.

Since such were her feelings it was only natural that she should shrink from submitting to a regular course of treatment, yet by the agonised entreaties of her friends she was at last prevailed upon to consult Bordeu, one of the most famous physicians of the day, and, as was noted in a former chapter, an enthusiastic advocate of the starving system. To do him justice, his verdict on her case seems to have been neither inhuman nor unintelligent. It was really her mental condition which was in fault, he said, and if that could be ameliorated she might recover, but, otherwise there was little hope, and it does not

[1] He only charges half-a-crown a time, and is quite good enough, in her opinion; but she shrewdly suggests that perhaps Abel's wife (who is out of sorts) will prefer a surgeon of more reputation at a fee of five shillings.

appear that he insisted upon remedies which he plainly enough saw to be useless. He did not even suggest that final and often marvellously successful experiment, change of air and scene. Such a prescription would indeed have been to no purpose. Julie de Lespinasse was as ingrained a town dweller as Samuel Johnson himself, and in her life there was not even a journey to the Hebrides, or a "jaunt" to Lichfield. In all the years that she lived in the metropolis, she never quitted it for more than a visit of a few days to some country house in the environs, and of late even this amount of exertion had become distasteful to her. It would have been out of the question for her in her present condition to encounter the fatigues of travelling.

With the advance of winter (1775-6) her sufferings manifestly increased. "I am so cold, so cold," she writes. "My thermometer is twenty degrees below that of Réaumur," and again. "I am freezing, shivering, dying of cold. . . . It is a perpetual state of torture." To anyone in this abnormal condition of chilliness, the Parisian winter must have been a severe trial indeed, both as regards the rigors of the atmosphere, and the very inadequate precautions taken against them. We remember Horace Walpole's lively description of how it struck a contemporary.

"Lapland is the torrid zone in comparison with Paris. We have had such a frost this fortnight," he caustically proceeds, "that I went nine miles to dine in the country to-day, in a villa exactly like a greenhouse, except that there was no fire but in one room. . . . We dined in a paved hall painted in fresco, with a fountain at one end; for in this country they live in a perpetual opera, and persist in being young when

they are old, and hot when they are frozen. . . . I am come home, and blowing my billets[1] between every paragraph, yet can scarce move my fingers." And again: "we were two-and-twenty at the Maréchale de Luxembourg's, and supped in a temple rather than in a hall. It is vaulted at top with gods and goddesses, and paved with marble; but the god of fire was not of the number."

Such would be the state of things encountered by Mademoiselle de Lespinasse every time she stirred from her own small, and therefore comparatively cozy, rooms, where we may hope that respectable fires were kept burning. To make the matter worse, it appears that she, like most ladies of that period, wore practically no clothing underneath. A muslin petticoat lined with cotton wool is the nearest approach to a warm inner garment that I have been able to discover in the inventory of her wardrobe. On the other hand, furs for outdoor wear were extremely popular, with both sexes, and with these she was well provided. Several mantles and pelisses of satin lined with ermine and silver-fox, and muffs[2] of blue fox, grebe, cock's feathers, and sable figure in the catalogue so often referred to.

Meanwhile Guibert, who, partly through the interest of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, had obtained what we should call a War Office appointment, was settled for the winter in Paris, along with his wife and her family. During these last sad months, he appears, it must be

[1] Fire-logs.

[2] Muffs were then carried by gentlemen as well as ladies. Mademoiselle de Lespinasse sent one as a present to Guibert, who made the not very delicate remark that it must have been expensive, and that therefore he ought either to decline or pay for it! "For shame," she replied. "You may be quite sure *I* should not give it you if it were expensive. Lest you should perish from cold as well as shame, I send it you back for your dinner-party to-day."

owned, to more advantage than usual. At the outset, indeed, he showed himself entirely ready to forget his obligations to the fair and gentle girl who had given her life into his keeping, but Julie de Lespinasse was resolute that such a wrong should not happen through her, and when he realised this a new reverence appeared in his attitude towards her. Henceforth, his behaviour is that of a devoted and respectful friend. It is true that at first he hurt her deeply by his inability to recognise how desperate was her physical condition. Like Mrs Dombey's sister-in-law, he seems to have urged upon her the necessity of "making an effort." Her reply has all the irritability of a justly outraged invalid.

"My dear friend, you are really splendid at giving advice, and whether it is from sympathy, or because my sufferings bore you, I cannot possibly do better, as you say, than try to follow it. You treat my cough, my loss of flesh, my sleeplessness, my internal troubles as if they were mere fine ladies' fancies, such as wearing a pagoda on your head or walking on one heel. You would like to cure me by moral treatment. My dear friend, how young you must be! For I do not like to say that you are very cold and indifferent. Believe me, neither my own will, nor anything in nature could save me now. No, not the resurrection of M. de Mora, the highest good that I can imagine, could change my fate."

Guibert's best excuse for this apparent want of feeling is contained in his own words, written immediately after Julie's death:

"She was so active, so animated, so much alive!

Alas! for the last two years, it was her mind which deceived my anxieties, and laid my fears to sleep. Every day, I saw her grow paler and weaker. But her intellect had never been so brilliant, her affections never so active. 'She cannot, cannot be dying!' I said to myself, each time I took leave of her. So much life should surely be proof against death, and I could as soon have imagined the extinction of the sun as the decease of Eliza.[1]"

Others besides Guibert testify to this remarkable activity of intellect maintained almost to the very last. "You would still find her interesting and animated in the midst of her sufferings and of her daily increasing weakness," writes Morellet, two months before her death, to her English admirer, Lord Shelburne. And her own letters contain abundant evidence of the interest which she still felt in her friends and everything concerning them. For one (M. de Saint Chamans) she exerts herself to procure an exemption from military duty, essential, as she thinks, if his life is to be saved. Another (Loménie de Brienne) has symptoms which alarm her, and she anxiously cross-examines Bordeu as to the real chances of his recovery. She writes the most shrewd and sound advice to Guibert in regard to his bearing towards his official superiors, with whom he seems much inclined to quarrel. The melancholy condition of Madame Geoffrin, who had temporarily rallied from an attack of paralysis destined within two years to prove fatal, affects her with an emotion beyond the power of her own sufferings to produce. "It was a pleasure mixed with

1 This absurd pseudonym is borrowed from Eliza Draper, the beloved of Sterne.

pain to see her once more. Ah! she grieved me deeply, for I seemed to see her death nearer at hand than my own. I could not restrain my tears in her presence, I was heartbroken."

Till within two or three months of the end, she endeavoured to continue her ordinary course of life, receiving her circle in the evenings, and "dragging herself" (the phrase is her own) to social gatherings, where, as she says, she sometimes coughed to such an extent as to deafen the whole company. But at last she became unable to leave her own rooms, or to see anyone but a few chosen friends. Guibert was of the number. His anxieties were at last thoroughly aroused, and no mark of attention or solicitude was wanting on his part. He put aside his official duties whenever they would have interfered with his daily visits to the invalid; he confided to her his most secret literary projects; he ran to and fro on her errands, spending hours in arranging for a change of house desired by her, though doubtless he knew all along that she was far too weak ever to carry out this last pathetic caprice. Some of his expressions seem indeed to indicate that his shallow, self-centred nature was stirred to an altogether unwonted depth, and that he now, for the first time, realised how much the dying woman had been to him. "I must say it," he writes, "because when I search my own heart I find that such is my innermost thought—if I had to choose between the loss of you and of everyone else that I know, I should not hesitate!"

The poor sufferer could not but be soothed by his tenderness, but the conviction (no doubt well founded) that his grief would not be of long duration imparts a certain sad irony to her gratitude for these tardy

marks of affection. "You are the most kind-hearted, and most light-minded of men," she writes to him, on hearing that he has sent twice during one night to inquire for her. "But, once more, I entreat you to be calm. You will only increase my sufferings." To be permitted to depart in peace is now her one prevailing desire, and she ceases not to look forward longingly to her deliverance from a life which had grown insupportably weary.

The end came on the morning of May the 22nd.[1] For some days before, Guibert was forbidden to enter her room, but could not tear himself from the house, and passed all his spare time in d'Alembert's apartment upstairs, plunged in a frenzy of grief. The dying woman's face had been distorted by a nervous convulsion of unusual severity, and she could not endure the thought that such an element of horror and grotesqueness should be imparted to his last impression of her. But those two faithful friends, of whom she had formerly said that they were to her "as a part of herself," d'Alembert and Condorcet,[2] were permitted to remain with her to the end. There was another watcher by the bed of death—her brother, Abel de Vichy, the only one of all her kin who had not been a good deal less than kind in his dealings with her. As a loyal Catholic was bound to do, he urged upon her the duty of reconciliation—even at this eleventh hour—with the Church, and a passage in one of his letters, quoted by the Marquis de Ségur, records that his efforts were crowned with

[1] 1776.

[2] Turgot had been dismissed from office ten days before her death, but she was then probably too far gone to realise this catastrophe, which meant the undoing of all his noble work.

success.[1] "She received the last sacraments," he says, "in despite of all the powers of the Encyclopedia" (*i.e.* of d'Alembert and Condorcet), and passed away "in a most Christian frame of mind." I leave it to the reader to determine whether it is more likely that she could, on half-an-hour's persuasion, so far depart from the convictions of a lifetime as to accept, *en masse*, the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church (for that is what the word Christian would have implied both to Abel and to her), or that, with her usual averseness to giving pain, she shrank from wounding the honest and good heart which was concerned for her eternal welfare. Yet, in truth, it would not be difficult to explain her action without resorting to either alternative. Few people then cared to brave the penalties of dying excommunicated, and we have no reason to think that Julie de Lespinasse, even setting aside the intervention of Abel, would have been among the number. She had never ceased to hear Mass on Sundays, and when special services were instituted, on the occasion of a jubilee, she had to a certain extent attended them. Several times in her letters she represents herself, in the most natural manner, as looking forward to her last resting-place at St Sulpice—her parish church. It is probable that, in her heart of hearts, she still retained a vague yearning affection for the faith of her childhood, and could not endure the thought of cutting herself adrift from all its hallowed associations.

It would have been impossible for d'Alembert to approve this act of submission to the ecclesiastical authority, but it does not appear that he opposed that

[1] The expenses of the administration of the Sacraments are duly noted among the claims on the deceased's estate.

strenuous resistance by which, in the case of Madame Geoffrin, he afterwards, not much to his honour, distinguished himself. His whole energies, in truth, were absorbed by that approaching sorrow which was to leave him, as he expressed it, "alone in the universe." The agony of parting was still further enhanced by that miserable atmosphere of misunderstanding which, for several years back, had embittered his relations with the dying woman. It is true that there had been many intervals in which the old tenderness had seemed on her side to revive in all its former fulness. "There is no one I care for more than for you, no one so necessary to my happiness, no one else for whose sake I wish to live," she had said to him ten months before her death, when the reaction produced by Guibert's marriage was at its height. And a few months later she had assured him with a sigh: "You are the only person I ever loved who has not made me unhappy." Undoubtedly these words expressed the conviction of her calmer moments, but when the tide of misery swept back over her she was unable, though she often struggled hard, to control her temper, and in the unreasoning irritability of bodily and mental disease poor d'Alembert saw only aversion to himself. He racked his brains to discover what ground for resentment he could possibly have given her, and amongst other strange conjectures, imagined that she suspected him, of all men, of leading an immoral life! Repeatedly, he was on the point of asking her for an explanation, but she seemed to shrink from anything approaching a scene, and the fear that agitation might be dangerous for her restrained him from speaking.

But on Julie's side no self-deception existed. She

knew well that the blame of their estrangement rested with her, and not with him, and on the night of her death she gathered together her remaining strength to implore his forgiveness for all the wrong that she had done him, all the pain that she had brought him. A torrent of heartfelt assurances rushed immediately to his lips, but this last effort had so exhausted her failing forces that she was unable any longer to understand what was said, and he ever afterwards cherished the agonising conviction that she had died believing herself unforgiven.

For some hours after she lay in a state of semi-unconsciousness. Once, she raised her head, and looking around her said with an air of surprise: "Am I still alive?" They were her last words. At two in the morning she passed away, apparently without pain.

The funeral took place next day at St Sulpice, d'Alembert and Condorcet being chief mourners. By her own express wish, the last observances were rendered in very simple fashion and a hideous custom[1] then prevalent, of laying out the dead in front of their homes, as a spectacle for all who passed by, was omitted.

Her will, written with her own hand three months previously, has an individuality rarely found in such documents, and the spirit in which all its provisions are conceived and expressed, helps us to understand why this woman was beloved beyond the ordinary measure of humanity. D'Alembert is appointed executor in these terms.

"I beg M. d'Alembert, in the name of the friend-

[1] Mercier alludes to this practice with disapproval in his "Tableau de Paris."

ship which he has always shown me, to have the kindness to execute this will. . . . I entreat his pardon a thousand times for all the trouble that I shall give him, but I beg him, in matters of detail, to leave as much as possible of the work to others."

The first legacies recorded are to her servants. Her maid, "who has been with me a long time, and who gives me great satisfaction," has all her mistress' wardrobe, and is besides residuary legatee.[1] The footman receives two years' wages,[2] his clothes and his bed. A poor charwoman, "of whom I am fond," has thirteen pounds, and a similar sum is left to her young son, who had likewise been employed in the establishment. Their legacies are to be paid them as soon as possible, "because they are in want."

Then follow the bequests to intimate friends, acquiring a peculiar value by the tact and grace with which they are in each case adapted to the recipient. Guibert is to have all her English books. Condorcet, the busts of Voltaire and d'Alembert, and such of her engravings as he cares to select. Madame de Saint Chamans, her rosewood dressing-table. "I hope that, as I had it in constant use, it will sometimes serve to recall my affection for her." Madame Geoffrin, "who is so dear to me, and has lavished such kindness upon me," is entreated to accept her little marble bird with the pedestal of beaten gold. To Dr Roux, her physician in ordinary, "who has shown me so much kindness and attention," she bequeaths her watch and clock, "as a very slight

[1] The cook had been in the service of the deceased for only a fortnight at the time of her death. Hence, doubtless, the omission of her name.

[2] One year's wages by the will, and another by verbal direction of the deceased to d'Alembert.

token of my gratitude." To d'Alembert, "as a token of my affectionate friendship," her "rosewood writing-desk with its marble stand, a great rosewood cabinet where I keep my books, and a rosewood *chiffonnière* with nine drawers, I have heard him say that he liked to have many drawers."

The will was supplemented by a sealed letter addressed to d'Alembert, and dated a week before her death. It begins with these pathetic words:

"I owe everything to you. I am so confident of your affection that I mean to employ all the strength left me to endure a life which no longer allows me anything to hope or fear. . . . Yet, as I cannot feel sufficiently sure of my own will, and it might easily be overcome by despair, I take the precaution of writing to beg you to burn, without reading them, all the papers which you will find in a large black portfolio. I have not the courage to touch them myself. It would kill me to see the handwriting of my friend" (*i.e.* Mora).

Then follow certain business details. She leaves behind her only fifty pounds in cash, and out of these forty pounds are owing to d'Alembert himself, but several of her dividends are due, and there will be much more than enough to pay her debts and her "little legacies."

The letter ends thus:

"Farewell, dear friend, do not regret me! Remember that by leaving this life I shall find rest, which I could no longer hope for here. . . . Once more, forget me. Take care of yourself, life should still have interest for you. Your goodness should

bring you happiness. . . . My death is but a proof of the love I bore to M. de Mora. His death proves but too plainly that he returned it in a way that you never imagined. Alas! when you read this, I shall be delivered from the burden that is crushing me. . . . Farewell, dear friend, for ever."

By a clause in the will, d'Alembert, in case her debts should exceed her assets, was to apply for help to Abel de Vichy, here styled her nephew, but this measure, as the testatrix had foreseen, proved altogether unnecessary. Save for the forty pounds due to d'Alembert, her debts were of an unimportant description. Twenty-five pounds to the cabinetmaker, thirteen to the milliner, four to the chemist, are by far the largest items. When her estate was finally wound up, and all liabilities had been discharged, a surplus of £430 accrued to the *femme-de-chambre*, her residuary legatee, who forthwith purchased a life annuity at ten per cent. In view of these circumstances I cannot help thinking that Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was fairly entitled to the reputation of a good economist —a reputation which she greatly coveted, but which M. de Ségur—in other respects the most appreciative of her biographers—seems inclined to deny her.

In performing the duties of executor, d'Alembert, who appears to have been a good man of business, might have found some distraction from his overwhelming sorrow; but, unhappily, those very duties led to a discovery which increased it tenfold. He was too honourable to examine the letters which he had been charged to burn, but there were many manuscripts protected by no such injunction to be looked over and classified, and amongst these one, entirely

in Julie's writing, attracted his attention. He opened it with a melancholy interest, but no foreboding of evil, and found that it contained a full account of her relations with Mora,[1] their mutual passion, and their hopes of union. The allusion in her testamentary letter had in no way prepared d'Alembert for this disclosure, and the result was at first a terrible revulsion of feeling—a sensation of almost intolerable wrong. That extraordinary fatality which in this matter attended his every action induced him to seek for comfort in the sympathy of—the Comte de Guibert! But his strangely chosen confidant demeaned himself—on this occasion—like a gentleman, and though d'Alembert knew that Mora had been preferred to himself he never knew that Guibert had been preferred to both.

It is impossible not to sympathise deeply with the man whose heartwhole devotion had received so inadequate a return. Yet it is equally impossible to feel that, in accepting Mora as a lover, Julie wronged d'Alembert otherwise than by withholding from him her confidence. And if we consider the anguish which such a confidence must inevitably have caused him, and her own uncertainty as to whether the betrothal would ever result in a marriage, we cannot but allow that there was much to excuse her dissimulation.

Against Mora himself, on the other hand, her sin, as she never failed to recognise, was undoubtedly grave. By strict rules of justice, indeed, it must be considered the one serious blot upon her character.

[1] This document, to which Madame Suard alludes, had evidently been overlooked by Mademoiselle de Lespinasse when making her final dispositions. Unhappily it is now impossible to trace it.

For, as regards the breach of abstract morality, we cannot too often remind ourselves that, for a woman with her antecedents and environment, the remarkable thing is—not that she should have been guilty of it, but—that her life should otherwise have been irreproachable.

Yet Julie de Lespinasse never ceased to believe that if Mora had lived to know all he would have forgiven her. D'Alembert, we know, did live to forgive her. So much is plain from those heart-broken outpourings[1] which show him, amid his bitter disillusionment, still clinging to the belief that, could she have realised his readiness to pardon all, she might, at long last, have learned to love him as he loved her. Surely, then, it is scarcely for us to be severe in condemning her.

Across the intervening gulf of over a hundred years, her unique and fascinating personality pleads with us on her behalf, as it pleaded then even with those who had suffered through her fault. We find in her some things which we needs must blame, but far more to be admired, pitied, and loved.

[1] "Aux Manes de Mademoiselle de Lespinasse," and "Sur la Tombe de Mademoiselle de Lespinasse."

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